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SATURDAY

23 DECEMBER 1995

INDEPENDENT

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50p
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Seeking perfection: Boys from Westminster Cathedral choir school, who are aged up to 13, rehearsing in central London yesterday for Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and carol services on Christmas Day. Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Rebels want to reintroduce adultery clause in attempt to wreck Lord Chancellor's 'no fault' reforms

Peers plot to sink divorce Bill

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

The Government is facing a barrage of wrecking amendments – including one which would restore adultery as grounds for divorce – to the controversial Family Law Bill when it enters its Lords' committee stage next month.

The moves will revive fears that up to 50 religious peers, mostly Conservatives, could be mobilised in a campaign to swing public and political opinion against key aspects of the measure.

If the amendments carry the day, they are likely to form the basis of an onslaught on the Bill by dissident Tory MPs when it reaches the Commons later in the year, and could expose serious divisions on the Conservative benches.

The fervent anti-divorce Tory peer Baroness Young, a former minister and former Conservative Party vice-chairwoman, has tabled amendments which would reintroduce the grounds of adultery and unreasonable behaviour that the Bill seeks to remove from the present law.

Another amendment seeks to sweep away a second significant plank of the Bill by doubling from one year to two the period of "reflection and consideration" during which couples, using mediation procedures if possible, would be expected to resolve differences over the finances of children.

A further amendment by Lady Young aims to retain the five-year bar on divorce where one spouse withholds their consent.

Amendments put down by the crossbencher Lord Simon of Glaisdale, the former law lord, are, if anything, even more restrictive. One seeks to bar divorce where there is a child under 16, or where a court considers it would not be in the interests of children under 16.

Despite the determined revolt expected among some Tory MPs as well as peers, the measure still stands a reasonable chance of becoming law. The government indicated it will be taken on a free vote but most Opposition MPs and peers are likely to support it.

The Bill, salvaged by Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, after efforts by some of his Government colleagues to defer it because of its controversial nature, is bound to be high profile – not least because it could now coincide with the increasingly expected divorce between the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Under the present law, the royal couple could get a divorce within three months on the grounds that they have lived apart for more than two years. But once it is law, the Bill would require the couple to wait a year before finalising a divorce. The law is, however, unlikely to be fully implemented for about two years.

Lord Simon, a former Tory

minister who is vehemently against divorce, has also suggested "affirmation of marriage" clauses to allow spouses to enter into legally binding agreements declaring their marriages indissoluble except by death, or except by death so long as there are children under the age of 16.

Although not all the amend-

ments

were

proposed by the opposition, they will be pressed to a vote during the committee stage, scheduled for 11, 18 and 23 January, opponents plan vociferous opposition in an attempt to influence opinion before the Bill transfers to the Commons later next year.

The Liberal Democrat peer

Earl Russell has tabled an amendment to delete one of Lord Mackay's concessions to

Tory backbenchers, whose protests stopped the earlier Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill from reaching the statute book in the last session. The clause would insist that when considering making occupation orders in favour of a co-habitee or former co-habitee, it must take into account the fact that the parties have "not given each other the commitment involved in marriage."

Lord Russell opposes also a clause in the Bill giving the Lord Chancellor the power to require divorcing couples' lawyers to urge the possibility of reconciliation and give advice on mediation and counselling services, and a clause giving courts the power to direct warring couples to attend mediation sessions.

JUMBO CROSSWORD

Win the complete Oxford dictionary on CD-Rom
Weekend page 20

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See page 19
for token and entry form

Outrage as Welsh opera loses bid for lottery cash

JOHN MCKEE

Plans for a Welsh National Opera house on the scale of the Sydney Opera were at serious risk after the Millennium Commission yesterday failed to give a grant for the building.

The Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, yesterday announced that the latest round of Commission grants funded by the National Lottery would not include money for the £86m Cardiff Bay Opera House.

MPs and Opera Board trustees reacted angrily, blaming an anti-Wales bias, a separate bid for money for a new national rugby stadium and the

controversial modernist design. Lord Crickhowell, chairman of the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust, was "flabbergasted by the decision" and accused the Millennium Commission of pro-London bias. The Trust had asked for £2.7m to help with building work through to 1997. Plans for the House to open on 1 March 2000 were last night off.

An application to redevelop Cardiff Arms Park in time for the 1999 Rugby World Cup, to be hosted by Wales, will be considered in time for the commission's next round of grants in February. For the past year, the bids for rugby and opera

were thought to be "competing for the soul of Wales". Glanmore Griffiths, honorary treasurer of the Welsh Rugby Union, refused to gloat. "We have never criticised the Opera House and her 'glass necklace' design horrified many Welsh people, and the then Welsh Secretary John Redwood expressed concern about the avant-garde nature of the design," he said.

The Iraqi architect last night said she was "very disappointed" by the Committee's decision but thought her design was not the reason for the lack of funding. "Maybe I'm being naive, but I don't take it personally."

The commission's deputy chief executive, Heather

Wilkinson, said: "To suggest we're running scared of modern architecture is quite wrong. We turned it down because the project wasn't ready."

The Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, said that more Millennium Commissioners had seen the Opera House than anything else and said the rejection of the application was due to risks over "finance, construction and design". She pointed to the £14.5m grant for a Llanelli Coast Park announced yesterday, and added that 10 per cent of the Millennium Commission funds of £336m had gone to Wales.

£2 in Kew, page 5



Rejected: Cardiff's planned opera house

We were going to call it Bishops Finger. But, ooh, yes we did didn't we.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.

IN BRIEF

Knives crackdown call
Labour demanded a crackdown on advertisements for mail order knives, some with 10in blades and known by names such as Rambo Sidearm and Rambo Shortword. Page 2

Fishing curbs agreed
New curbs on catches by Britain's fishing fleet will take effect next month after agreement in Brussels to cut quotas in an attempt to preserve stocks. Page 4

Man has CJD
An ex-abattoir worker has been diagnosed as having Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. Page 6

Turkey goes to polls
Turkish voters face a leap into the unknown in tomorrow's general election. Page 10

Today's weather
Mild in the South. Colder in the North, with showery rain that will spread south. Page 2

operators of 6 to 9 per cent.
At the same time as announcing its price cuts, Thomas Cook revealed that the running battle it has been fighting with Thomson, Britain's largest tour operator and owner of Lunn Poly, is close to resolution.

But for the Christmas holidaymakers untroubled by discounts of up to 15 per cent on package tours a day after Lunn Poly revealed a pay-by-instalment plan for holidaymakers. Other companies are expected to follow as the Christmas-New year selling season swings into full gear on Boxing Day. The latest cuts are partly offset by recent increases by tour operators.

roads as traffic built up on main routes and an accident on the M1 caused a 10-mile tailback. On the A2 near the junction of the M25 in Kent another accident led to long tailbacks.

Among those fleeing Britain

for the festive period, the most popular destinations from Heathrow are Paris, Amsterdam and New York; for Gatwick it is Tenerife, Spain, Florida and Australia. For skiers, the slopes of Switzerland, Austria and France are in demand.

Heathrow airport will handle

800,000 passengers over the Christmas period, while Stansted will play host to 100,000 and Luton to 50,000, a 40 per cent

increase on last year. British Airways will take 250,000 people away over the festive period and is operating 35 flights on Christmas Day, when passengers will get a traditional Christmas meal and will be able to see the Queen's Christmas message.

On the road, motorists were

having to contend with accidents, heavy spray and, in places, flooding. "It seems as if many people have taken the afternoon off and roads have been really busy since about 2pm," said an AA Roadwatch spokeswoman. "It's really busy and it's probably going to get worse."

TURN TO PAGE 2

Holiday price war for Christmas

PAUL RODGERS and
IAN MACKINNON

Britain's Christmas festivities got under way yesterday with long traffic jams, almost half a million people flying out to sun and holiday companies launching a price war.

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TURN TO PAGE 2

Kew awarded £21m
The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, received a £21m grant from the Millennium Fund to protect world flora. Page 5

section ONE

BUSINESS 15-16 COMMENT 12-13 CROSSWORD 22-24 GAZETTE 14 LEADING ARTICLES 12 LETTERS 12 NEWS 2-10 OBITUARIES 14 SHARES 18 SPORT 19-24 UNIT TRUSTS 15 WEATHER 2

Independent WEEKEND

ARTS 7 BOOKS 8-9 CHESS 23 COUNTRY 10 CROSSWORD 20 LISTINGS 18,19 MONEY 16,17 PROPERTY 11 REVIEWS 7 SHOPPING 4-6 TV & RADIO 21-24 TRAVEL 12-14

erts

IN BRIEF

news

Everyone's favourite ingredient: a deer for Christmas



Dinner date: Many of the red deer roaming the rolling hillsides around Brecon Court deer farm, in Gwent, are destined for festive feasts this Christmas

Photograph: Rob Stratton

TONY HEATH.

Venison, the flesh of deer, is becoming Britain's fashionable meat. With the lean, dark meat finding its way on to more and more dinner tables – especially around Christmas time – farming deer is now becoming an attractive enterprise for farmers once sceptical of anything other than beef.

Desmond McElney, who runs a herd of 600 on 180 acres of rolling South Wales countryside, said: "The taste for venison has been building up quickly in recent years." He

added that no one was denigrating beef, "but people are now becoming more aware of the fact that farmed venison is an alternative". The traditional suspicion of a food once held to be more Scottish than English is fading as Britons embrace healthier eating habits. Venison's fat content is 6.4 per cent against pork's 26 per cent. Its cholesterol content is about half that of beef.

Earlier this week, several hundred young deer barely six months old were sheltering in barns at Brecon Court deer farm, which Mr McElney took

over in 1988. Before that he worked for 27 years in business before taking early retirement as European finance director of a multinational engineering company. He and his wife, Barbara, now co-run the farming enterprise on the outskirts of the village of Llansoy, in Gwent.

Older animals roam the hillsides behind high fences. The head stockman, Neil Clark, said he was happy with this year's "rutting" – the breeding service performed by the farm's 21 stags. The rutting season, which lasts for two months, ended a few weeks ago. "The

stags lose up to 20 per cent of their body weight during the rut. Come June we will have an increase of 200 in the deer population here," Mr Clark said.

Unlike sheep, deer do not require dipping and do not attract subsidies.

"What the two animals do have in common is an ability to crop grass almost as closely as a lawn mower," Mr McElney said.

The economics of deer farming is uncomplicated by wrangles with the Ministry of Agriculture over cash hand-outs. Depending on the cut, the meat fetches between £1 and £6

per pound from hotels and restaurants which serve venison on the menu.

However, deer farming in Britain is still small-scale. About 40,000 head are reckoned to be farmed on fewer than 400 holdings, compared with 2 million "behind the wire" in New Zealand.

But the British palate is shedding its inhibition. Reviewing his seven years in farming, Mr McElney said: "There's much more interest in venison now. When I began I didn't know a thing about raising deer, but I learnt."

Venison with Port and Shallots

3lb (1.4kg) boned and tied joint

1½-oz (35g) butter

1tbs sunflower oil

1 bottle port

1½-lb (600g) shallots

1 large orange – strips of zest removed

2tbs plain flour

salt and freshly ground pepper

15g thyme (include stalks if fresh)

15g flat leaf parsley (fresh)

2 bay leaves

2tbs redcurrant jelly

Steep venison and bay leaves in port overnight. Remove meat from dish, retaining port and bay leaves.

drain and pat dry. Peel the shallots leaving some of the root intact. Melt butter and oil in a heavy based

pan and seal the meat all over. Remove and keep warm. Sauté the shallots in the butter turning until light golden in colour. Remove and set aside with the meat.

Stir the flour into the hot butter mixture to make a roux and pour in the port, stirring all the time. Squeeze the orange and add juice to the sauce with the redcurrant jelly, thyme, seasoning and bay leaves. Return meat and shallots to pan and simmer for 1 hour 20 minutes. Half an hour before the end of cooking add fine strips of orange zest to the dish and half the flat leaf parsley. When cooked, cut into slices, pour the sauce over it and scatter the remaining parsley over the dish. Serve with mashed parsnip and potato.

■ Recipe serves six people and is by Victoria Whitbread, of Victoria Whitbread Catering, London.

Tragedy of orphaned boy, 9

JAMES CUSICK

Only two days after attending the funeral of his father, a boy of nine is facing Christmas as an orphan after he found his mother dead in her bedroom.

The double tragedy has shocked the school and family friends of Ben Bradshaw, from Abingdon, Oxfordshire. Described as lively, energetic and polite, he is said to be "lost without his parents".

Police were astonished at the bravery of the boy after he called 999 when he went to his mother's bedroom in the morning and found he could not wake her. Paramedics pronounced Aneurine Bradshaw dead at the scene.

Thames Valley Police, who released details of the incident yesterday, said they had removed tablets from the house.

Ben was alone when he discovered the body of his mother lying collapsed on the bathroom floor. Police said there were no suspicious circumstances connected with her death.

Mrs Bradshaw, 44, a nurse,



Ben Bradshaw: Parents died within days of each other

had taken Ben to the funeral of his father, Bill, a 52-year-old copywriter who had died from cancer.

Although friends said he fought hard against the spreading disease and had refused to go into a hospice full time so that he could spend as much time as possible with his family, pain had forced him to spend his last week in a hospice. After the funeral, his wife had said both she and Ben wanted to "get back to normal".

David Hastings, a friend of the family who works at Oxford University, said: "It is hard to react other than to be very shocked and sad. Ben took up most of her time – he is a lovely boy, very lively, energetic and always very polite. This is such a tragic way for him to spend Christmas."

Mr Bradshaw's sister, Jean, and her husband Terry, are now looking after Ben at their home in Preston, Lancashire. In an attempt to get his life back to

normal as soon as possible, he has been enrolled in a primary school in the town where his cousin is a pupil. However, his Abingdon school friends are missing him.

William Ginger, one of Ben's best friends said: "I can't believe what has happened and I'm very sorry for Ben." William has written a letter to his friend saying: "I am sorry about your mum and dad both dying. I feel really sad for you."

William's mother, Julia Ginger, said Ben was always around her home making noise and playing. "The house seems quiet now that he's gone," she said.

Neighbours who knew the Bradshaws well said they felt he was a "studious boy" and that he would be alright with his relatives in Lancashire. Mrs Bradshaw's only surviving relative is her sister, who lives in the United States.

Ben's former headteacher, John Fisher, said: "This is a tragic story that has shocked us all."

"The big fear is that other children who have lost a parent will be worried that they may lose the other."

Jackson set for top of the tree



Michael Jackson looks set to be No 1 in the pop charts for Christmas No 1, say record industry experts.

Jackson's "Earth Song" is expected to hold onto the position at the top of the charts when the new rundown begins tomorrow, despite stiff competition from Mike Flowers' "Wonderwall" – an easy-listening version of the Oasis hit song.

Virgin Out Price made the prediction despite the Flowers single comfortably outselling Jackson in their stores.

Tower Records in Piccadilly Circus, central London, said it was selling three times as many copies of "Wonderwall" but still anticipated a triumph for Jackson. Head of singles products at Virgin Out Price, Matthew Kreuzer said both records had been selling "incredibly well".

"It's going to be close as to who is No 1 but from what I've heard from the two record companies Michael Jackson is just about ahead and will hang on. Lots of people just go into a record shop in the Christmas week and ask for the No 1 one regardless of what it is. Michael Jackson is the current number one and that will work in his favour."

Electric rail plans 'shelved'

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Transport Correspondent

Nearly all rail electrification schemes have been shelved for the next 10 years and rail replacement programmes have been cut back drastically under investment plans for the privatised railway, Labour claimed today.

An analysis of Railtrack's 10-year investment plan published earlier this week makes no mention of most important electrification schemes.

The only new electrification which Railtrack is planning is the Heathrow Express London Paddington to Heathrow scheme and part of the cross-London Crossrail which has been delayed by parliamentary opposition.

Railtrack's 10-year programme of investing at least £1bn a year was criticised by opposition politicians for being the minimum necessary to keep the railway going at the same standard.

In particular, Railtrack forecasts that rail replacement rates decline from the average rate of 2.1 per cent annually in the 1980s to 0.8 per cent for the next 10 years. This implies an aver-

age rail life of 125 years, which compares with a European average of 2.7 per cent (an average of 37 years). According to evidence submitted to the Commons Transport Committee for its recent report on rail finances, such a low level of replacement is not feasible and will lead to deteriorating conditions for rail passengers.

The electrification schemes delayed include Edinburgh to Glasgow Queen St, Scotland's busiest commuter route, the Midland Main Line St Pancras to Sheffield, the Great Western Reading to Bristol, the west of England and South Wales and Trans-Pennine service from York and Hull to Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool.

Brian Wilson, Labour's transport spokesman, said: "Some of these schemes are crucial to the local and regional economies."

Railtrack said last night: "We have identified certain schemes which are going ahead. But it is not an exclusive list and other schemes may go ahead provided there is a viable commercial case for them."

In the Dower-Dunkirk train ferry service, which has been operating for more than 60 years, will end today.



How do you celebrate the holidays? We hope you'll drop us a line and tell us. Write to the Jack Daniel Distillery, Lynchburg, Tennessee USA.

ALL OF US HERE AT JACK DANIEL DISTILLERY in Lynchburg, Tennessee hope you're getting your Christmas decorations put up in plenty of time. (From the look of things, our head ricker Jack Bateman is on his way from the sawmill with a freshly-cut pine wreath.) And we hope that no matter where in the world you're from, your holidays will be filled with family, friends and all the other blessings of the season.



JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

NUARY
LIES

49

news

Fishing rights: Minister says he limited damage for British fleets by winning catch concessions estimated at £30m a year

Trawlermen all at sea over new EU quotas

KATHERINE BUTLER
Brussels

New curbs on catches by Britain's fishing fleet will take effect from next month after agreement in Brussels to cut quotas in an effort to protect dwindling fish stocks.

But EU fisheries ministers, who haggled for 20 hours before finally closing a deal at dawn yesterday, succeeded in extracting significant concessions for their national fleets, toning down the most savage of the

proposed cuts. The European Commission had sought catch restrictions of up to 50 per cent for sensitive stocks such as mackerel, plaice, herring and hake.

In Britain's case, the difference between the commission's proposed reduction in quotas and the final outcome of the negotiations is worth over £30m to the industry, the Fisheries Minister, Tony Baldry, claimed.

Emerging from the all-night talks, Mr Baldry said he had managed to trim 10 per cent off

the total of proposed across-the-board cuts. "I achieved my objective of securing the best possible deal for British fishermen consistent with the conservation of stocks for the future."

Asked if he believed the deal would satisfy Euro-sceptics in the Tory party who want Britain to leave the EU fishing regime, Mr Baldry replied: "You tell me what deal would satisfy the Euro-sceptics."

Fishermen were predictably critical of the cuts, which will force many trawlermen to

incide with the bitterly contested opening up of fishing grounds west of Britain, the Irish Box, to the Spanish and Portuguese fleets, on 1 January.

They grudgingly admitted that Mr Baldry's efforts had succeeded in softening the blow but complained that new restrictions in the North Sea and western waters would hit British fleets harder than any others.

Barrie Deas, of the National Federation of Fisheries Organisations, said the cuts would force many trawlermen to

choose between bankruptcy or cheating on the quotas. John Wilkinson, a Tory Euro-sceptic and one of the leaders of the recent Commons revolt against the Government's fisheries policy, said: "I shall continue to press for British sovereignty over what should be a British resource in British waters. We want a 200-mile limit and to withdraw from the Common Fisheries Policy so that we can manage our own resources."

Several other Tory MPs and many fishermen want to pull

Britain out of the Common Fisheries Policy. But the Government has no intention of doing so. Apart from the diplomatic damage, it would still have to negotiate intensively with the rest of Europe over fish stocks because they migrate in and out of British waters.

The EU's fisheries commissioner, Emma Bonino, accused ministers of lacking the political courage to take the drastic measures required to sustain stocks. "The longer we postpone these measures the more

serious the problem of stocks becomes," she warned.

British fleets face a huge 33 per cent cut in the mackerel quota. Ministers found this part of the deal virtually impossible to unravel as it had been earlier agreed with Norway, which jointly manages migratory species in the North Sea.

British quotas for sole, plaice, hake, and herring were also cut, but UK fishermen will be able to catch more cod, haddock and whiting in 1996 than this year. Those who fish for valuable

plaice and sole off eastern England were particularly hard hit.

All in all, Britain's quotas next year for the eight main commercial species are 90,000 tonnes lower than this year - a cut of about 14 per cent. The biggest cuts are, however, concentrated on the less valuable types like mackerel and herring.

During the negotiations, Mr Baldry raised the prospect of an eventual phase-out of the quota system, and its replacement by technical conservation measures such as new net designs.

Curbs make 'rise in fish prices inevitable'

GLENDY COOPER

The bright white lights of Billingsgate fish market shone out at dawn yesterday, but inside the atmosphere was distinctly gloomy.

"It's dreadful," said Cyril Duffy, of Nathan Ltd, who sells the fish most affected - plaice, haddock, cod and sole. "Our prices are bound to go up. And it won't just be us that suffers. The prices will go up for everyone, including the public."

Tony Lynes, chairman-elect of the London Fish Merchants Association, said: "There's going to be a reduced volume and prices will go up. Then the fear is that the public won't buy it because they are not prepared to pay. There is no argument about the fact we need quotas. Our argument is about the way they've gone about it."

"What really upset me this week over the fishing row is that it became a way of scoring political points," he added. "Everyone forgot about the real issue which is how are our fishermen going to earn a living. The fishermen are poor relatives of the farmers. They don't get set-asides or any other of the protections."

Chris Leftwich, chief inspector of the Fishmongers' Company, agreed: "Everyone accepts sensible controls," he said. "But they could organise things better. Discards mean that fisher-

men throw different types of fish back into the sea so they don't go over their quota of landed fish. But the fish are already dead so it's not doing any good."

The main target for their vitriol was not, however, the Government or the EU, but the Spanish and French fishermen, who were widely seen as contravening the guidelines.

"The problem is that the Spanish and French will come into the Irish Box and go for juvenile fish," said Simon Newnes, of CJ Newnes.

There is a limit to what the customer is prepared to pay'

"There's a big market for small fish in Spain. You'll see them with John Dorys no bigger than four inches. How can stock ever replenish if they take those?"

"The price of fish depends on supply and demand," said Steve Hatt, of Steve Hatt Fishmongers. "Obviously there will be cuts and a tendency to put up prices. It's simple mathematics."

Others were not so pessimistic. Geoffrey Molloy, of the UK Association of Frozen Food Producers, said cod prices were

unlikely to be affected because more than 80 per cent of British cod was imported.

The UK, as the world's cod-eating capital, takes 25 per cent of the total international catch, but only fishes 5 per cent of the species itself.

"The housewife won't see very much difference in price because, over the years, we have become increasingly dependent on imports," Mr Molloy said.

"Of the total amount of fresh and frozen fish eaten in the UK, about two-thirds is imported while about 70 per cent of white fish [cod and haddock] is imported, mainly from countries like Canada, Greenland and Iceland."

Other species caught in UK waters which are affected by quotas, such as herring and mackerel, are not particularly popular in Britain and tended to be exported to countries like France and Spain, he said.

John Adams, of the National Federation of Fishmongers, also believed huge price increases were unlikely.

"In the final analysis there is a limit to what the customer is prepared to pay," he said.

"If, for example, cod sells now for £2.50 a pound and the quota is dropped by a half, it does not mean that customers are going to pay £5 a pound. They obviously won't... Customers are very price sensitive."



Market forces: Fish merchants at Billingsgate, London, are increasingly fearful for the future of their industry

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

WARNING

Important Safety Notice



habitat "Jelly" candleholders

[Codes: 612 905/413/472/173]

Due to an unforeseen production error, habitat has discovered that the candlesticks above may ignite if the candle is left to burn to its base—the flame acts upon the resin.

Therefore, if you have purchased one of these candlesticks, for your own safety, please cease using it immediately.

We also recommend that you return the candlestick(s) to your nearest habitat store for a full refund.

If you are uncertain whether yours is one of the candlesticks above, please feel free to call Customer Services on: 0171 255 2545.

We apologise for any concern or inconvenience this may cause.

And remember, this Christmas, please don't leave any burning candles unattended.

habitat

Margins of error 'whittled away'

The agreement that European Union fisheries ministers reached in the small hours of yesterday was a classic compromise which leaves fish stocks in real danger of collapse.

This is the view of scientists and nature conservationists who deplore the annual bargaining which leads to dangerously high catch quotas in the North Sea and North-east Atlantic.

Many fishermen agree that stocks are depleted but they also feel the scientists are often over-cautious or mistaken. They have no incentive to fish less; that would only harm their earnings.

John Shepherd, a former senior scientist at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, points out that if they fished less, they could probably catch more after a few years of stock recovery.

Most stocks have been hammered so hard and so long that they are depressed well below the optimum size for commer-

cial exploitation. About 50 to 60 per cent of the total weight of fish in the main commercial species is taken by man each year. The lifespan of the cod is 10 or more years; in the North Sea almost none survives beyond 4.

Yet in Brussels the ministers agreed an increase in cod quotas. This is because scientists have recently detected a small cod baby boom, caused by natural fluctuations. These natural fluctuations can work both ways, however. A sudden fall in baby fish numbers makes the impact of chronic overfishing far worse; hence the need for caution.

It is caution and margins for error that are gradually whittled away during the Common Fisheries Policy's annual process of setting quotas for each nation. Government scientists first

reach agreement on stock sizes and suggest how many fish might be taken. Next, the European Commission recommends to EU members total allowable catches (TACs) — and is tempted not to incur the wrath of governments and fishermen by sharp cuts.

The final act is for EU fish-

eries ministers to agree quotas. They, too, are under strong pressure from fishermen to squeeze up the quotas. EU governments have little scope for demanding a greater share of the quotas for their own fishermen. So they talk up the TACs.

Nicholas Schoon

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the Inner House after hearing argument from the Lord Advocate. "It would be inappropriate for me to express an opinion by way of judgment on the factual material and the legal issues raised," he said.

The move, announced yesterday, means a delay in any decision in the case of Janet Johnstone, who has been in a coma for nearly four years.

Law Hospital NHS Trust, in Lanarkshire, is seeking a declaration that it would be lawful for it to stop artificially feeding Mrs Johnstone, 52, who doctors say is in a persistent vegetative state with no hope of recovery.

But Lord Cameron of Loch Broom told the Court of Session in Edinburgh yesterday that he would not be issuing a judgment after nearly two-and-a-half days of evidence and legal argument. Instead, he is to make a report which the Inner House of senior judges will consider.

The NHS trust has also asked Scotland's top law officer, the Lord Advocate, to clarify his position on whether a doctor who stops treating a patient would be granted immunity from prosecution for murder or culpable homicide.

Lord Cameron announced that he would make a report to

the Inner House after hearing argument from the Lord Advocate. "It would be inappropriate for me to express an opinion by way of judgment on the factual material and the legal issues raised," he said.

These are novel and raise most important matters of public policy and indeed policy for this court. I can intamate I will be reporting this matter to the Inner House and will do so as soon as may be."

The Lord Advocate, Lord Mackay of Drumadoon, had suggested such a course of action at the beginning of his argument. He said it was not his intention to frustrate the action which the doctors at Law Hospital wanted to take but he had to ensure that it was legally competent. This was only fair to doctors and the patient's relatives. If the court could not grant permission in such a case then it was a matter for Parliament itself.

Lord Mackay said Scotland was now out of step with the situation in England where there was a judgment from the House of Lords in the case of the Hillsborough victim Tony Bland. This was a problem which had to be put right, he said.

EU quota

Millennium landmarks: Plan to rebuild botanic gardens' seed bank hailed as 'one of most important gifts of our generation'

Kew given £21m grant to protect world flora

JOHN MCKEE

The £21m of millennium cash awarded by Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for National Heritage, to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, will be one of the "most important gifts of our generation", the recipients said yesterday.

The money will go towards a Millennium Seed Bank which will aim to collect, research and conserve seeds from almost all the United Kingdom's flora by 2000.

By 2010 it is hoped the new institution will have ensured the safety of 10 per cent of the world's flora – much of which is on the verge of extinction.

The bank will be built at Wakehurst Place, West Sussex – the site of the gardens' present seed bank – and will open for the public to see the work sorting, selecting and storing seeds. It will concentrate on species in the UK – with local botanists playing a part in seed collection – and on the species of the arid and semi-arid regions of the world.

According to senior environmental sources, in the next 50 years, some 25 per cent of plant species could become extinct.

The Royal Botanic Gardens is acknowledged worldwide as pre-eminent in its field and the seed bank project should build on its reputation as a centre for scientific excellence.

Mrs Bottomley said: "The saving of rare seeds and potentially useful wild species of plants is one of the most important gifts our generation could give to the people of the third millennium."

"There is no doubt that species of plants will continue to become extinct in the wild. The design of the new seed bank

will ensure both the safety of the seeds as a world resource and will allow our visitors to learn more about the importance of seeds and their conservation.

"The installation of this vast expansion to our seed bank is one of the greatest and most important challenges ever faced by the Royal Botanic Gardens."

The total cost of the new seed bank is estimated at £58m. The Royal Botanic Gardens has already raised £30m for private funds and is launching a spring campaign for the extra £7m needed.

The gardens' present bank, which has been operating at Wakehurst Place for 23 years, only contains 2 per cent of flowering plant flora.

The Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, said yesterday that the grant fell in line with the spirit of the Biodiversity Convention which John Major signed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

He added: "The seed bank will stand as a major contribution by the UK to the conservation of biodiversity at a time of growing international concern about the consequences of genetic erosion.

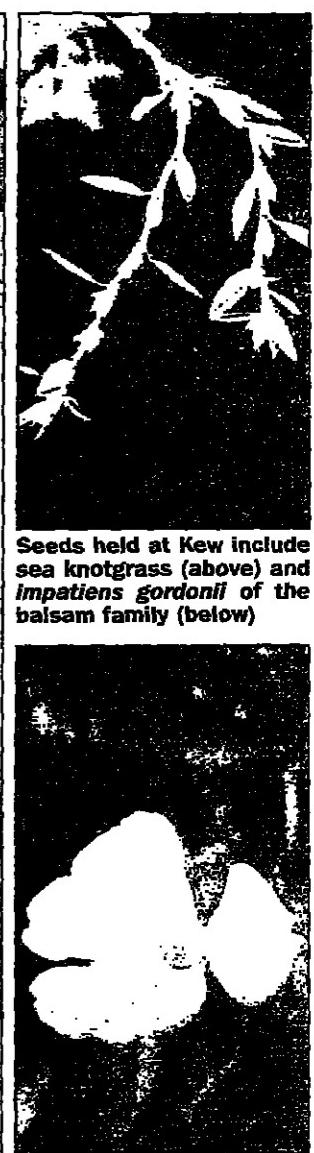
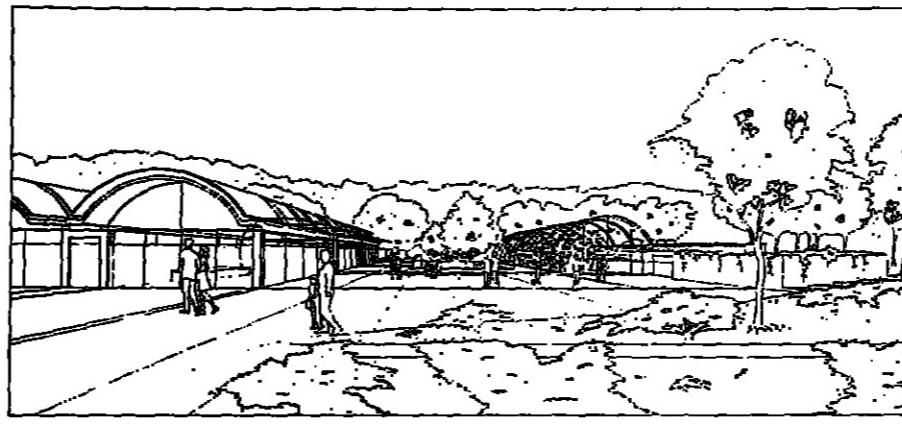
The Royal Botanic Gardens is acknowledged worldwide as pre-eminent in its field and the seed bank project should build on its reputation as a centre for scientific excellence."

Mrs Bottomley said: "The Millennium Seed Bank, our fifth national landmark, will be of global significance in the third millennium. Our support for this project stands as a major investment in the well-being of the planet and future generations."



Mighty oaks from little acorns grow: It is hoped the Millennium Seed Bank will save species from the UK and abroad

Photograph: Dillon Bryden

Seeds held at Kew include sea knotgrass (above) and *Impatiens gordonii* of the balsam family (below)

An artist's impression of the Millennium Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

'Green' schemes given £46m

Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, yesterday announced grants worth £46m from the Millennium Commission to 10 environmental and community projects.

Mrs Bottomley, the commission's chairman, said that the grants were intended to make a significant difference to the quality of life of the British people. The principal recipient is the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, west London, for the Millennium Seed Bank, which

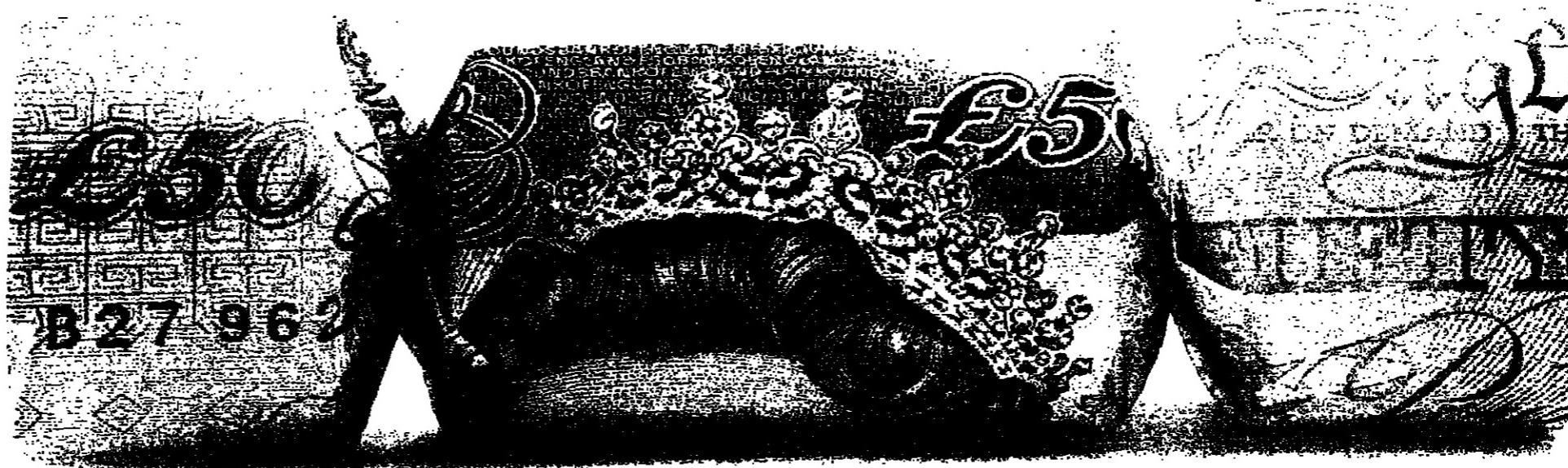
received £21.5m. It becomes the fifth "landmark" project following on from the Tate Gallery, Portsmouth Harbour, an "Earth Centre" at Doncaster, South Yorkshire, and the redevelopment of Hampden Park.

Llanelli Borough Council was awarded £14.5m to extensively restore a valuable stretch of Welsh coastline and create a new coastal park. England's only stretch of magnesium limestone cliffs is to be restored and conserved with the help of £4.5m of Millennium money.

Durham County Council is carrying out £9.5m work on an area which has been damaged by the dumping of waste.

A 60ft observation tower will be the centrepiece of the redevelopment of the WildFowl and Wetlands Trust headquarters at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. The commission awarded the Trust £2.8m towards the £5.6m project. And a new £3.5m National Wildflower Centre is to be set up in Merseyside with the help of £1.6m funding from the commission.

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news

Beef alert: Ailing victim of Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease may have only a few months to live

Fears of BSE link with sick abattoir worker

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

A former abattoir worker is returning home from hospital after being diagnosed as having Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (CJD). The man, who is in his early fifties, will spend Christmas with his family, following tests carried out at York District Hospital.

The case has aroused the interest of the Medical Research Council's CJD Surveillance Unit, based in Edinburgh, which is collating figures to help determine whether it is possible for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), "mad cow disease", to be passed to humans, causing CJD.

However, a doctor at the hospital emphasised that the case is reckoned to be the first in the area since 1985. Statistically, we would have expected two since then," said Dr Ray Marks, executive medical director for the hospital's trust.

The Department of Health also said that the number of

confirmed deaths from CJD to the end of November this year was just 29. This compares with 55 for 1994.

The York man is understood to have been a full-time abattoir worker. Dr Marks said that the man is now showing signs of dementia, and that CJD is "the only diagnosis left". The prognosis is not good: "He probably only has months to live if our diagnosis is correct." The man, who will be readmitted to the hospital after Christmas, was examined earlier this week by Robert Will, head of the Edinburgh surveillance unit.

The past month has seen heightened fears that people who have eaten beef from cows infected with BSE or who have been in contact with infected cattle might be especially at risk of developing CJD.

There is no evidence that this can occur. But a number of scientists have commented on the statistical improbability of six recent cases of CJD in the United Kingdom – four involving dairy farmers, and two involv-

ing teenagers. Analysis by Sheila Gore of the MRC's Biostatistics Unit in Cambridge put the chance of this at 1 in 10,000. She said in November that this "signals an epidemiological alert" which required investigation.

The latest case is thought to be the first involving an abattoir worker. Such people might be at risk if BSE could pass to humans because the disease is especially concentrated in the brain and spinal cord. Although the head is removed in one piece, workers have often used water-cooled circular saws to remove the spine – creating what one scientist calls "a fine haze of grey matter" which might be highly infectious.

However, people who develop the disease often do so after the age of 50, according to research data from a number of countries. And CJD is also found in countries which do not have BSE. In some countries, the disease occurs more frequently than the one per million per year that is the average in the UK.



Brief glory: Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, taking charge of the Duchess of Hamilton yesterday at Loughborough Central station on the Great Central Railway, Britain's only mainline steam railway, accompanied by Geoff Morris, footplate inspector (right)

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Former spy on arms charge is denied bail

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

Paul Grecian, the former British spy, will be spending Christmas in a South African jail after a magistrate yesterday refused him bail on the grounds that he was likely to abscond.

Interpol agents arrested Mr Grecian, 40, when he arrived in Johannesburg for a holiday with his South African fiancée, Elizabeth Powell, eight days ago. He now faces possible extradition to the United States, where he is wanted on charges of fraud, perjury and conspiracy to sell weapons components to Iraq.

US prosecutors from New Jersey asked South Africa to oppose Mr Grecian's application for bail, pending an extradition hearing, and were supported by the court's magistrate, Dion Schenkel.

He said the accused's background in espionage made him a significant flight risk. The magistrate said even if Mr Grecian surrendered his passport and agreed to report to police every day, he could still call on



Paul Grecian: Court feared he was likely to abscond

his experience as a spy to help him flee the country, especially with his MI6 connections. The extradition hearing was set for 22 January.

Mr Grecian's barrister, Lawrence Hodges, said he would appeal against the decision at the Supreme Court in Johannesburg on.

Mr Hodges rejected prosecution claims that his client had huge resources, saying that Mr

Grecian was innocent after his long battle against almost identical charges in Britain. He was finally acquitted last month.

The acquittal by the British Court of Appeal followed admissions by the Government that it condoned Mr Grecian's deals with the Iraqi government in return for information on Baghdad's military capabilities.

Mr Grecian told the court hearing that he had no intention of jumping bail. He said he had never run away from anything in his life and did not want to jeopardise his status in South Africa because of his fiancée.

- Mr Schenkel said yesterday that Mr Grecian could face a possible 25-year jail sentence if he were convicted on all US charges.

According to the US indictment, Mr Grecian and his firm, Ordnance Technology, had a contract in the late 1980s to supply Iran with a factory capable of producing 600,000 artillery fuses a year. The indictment accuses him of obtaining fuse components from a New Jersey-based US firm and pretending that the end-user was Jordan.

Search begins for causes of fatal rig blast

Health and safety experts were yesterday investigating a blast that killed three workmen carrying out tests on an offshore gas rig under construction at a Tyneside engineering yard.

Two of the men died instantly and the third died of his injuries later after they were caught by a sudden rush of gas at the Howdon yard of Amec, one of the North-east's leading offshore companies. Four other men were hurt in the accident, which happened late on Thursday on a gas rig as nitrogen was being used to test piping systems.

The men who died were all close to the point of release and took the full force of the blast.

One of the injured men said: "As far as I know they were taking a flange off when it happened. I was just assisting the riggers when it went up. The next thing I knew I was just wandering around."

About 40 firefighters were called to the yard but there was no blaze and little immediate sign of damage. Station Officer George Arnott said: "It was a strange scene – nothing seemed out of place except there were three casualties lying there seriously injured. Once we started inspecting the site, however, we realised something quite severe had happened."

The incident was a release of gas under pressure rather than an explosion, he said, like bursting a balloon under very high pressure. "It has probably thrown the men back quite

forcibly, and at quite a speed." The dead and injured workers were understood to be members of the GMB union, which represents most of the labour force at Amec.

Martin Gannon, a regional union official, said: "Our hearts go out to the families of the victims... A full inquiry will be held by the Health and Safety Executive and we will be asking for all the details and will be fully involved in that inquiry. We will be looking to make sure this sort of tragedy never occurs in the future." One of the union's first aims would be to give all possible help to the families of the victims, he said.

Dennis Scott, operations director at Amec, said: "What has happened has come as a great shock to everyone... Until we get the [Health and Safety Executive] reports I am afraid we cannot say too much more about the incident."

"There could be a number of reasons why it happened and I really would not like to speculate before the completion of the investigation."

Mr Scott added: "Obviously everyone is in deep shock and our deepest sympathies go out to the families and friends of the casualties. As a sign of respect we decided to send everybody home so there will be no work in the yard today. It will be closed until further notice."

The four workers who escaped the main force of the blast were all able to go home after hospital treatment.

The Radio 1 disc jockey Chris Evans was fined a day's pay yesterday for failing to turn up for his breakfast show on Thursday.

The film-a-year presenter, whose company, Ginger Productions, makes the show for the BBC, is believed to have been fined about £7,000 by Radio 1's controller, Matthew Bamister. He spent almost 30 minutes in the controller's office where he was warned about fulfilling his contract. A BBC spokeswoman said: "Chris has been severely told off and his wages docked, which for him is quite substantial."

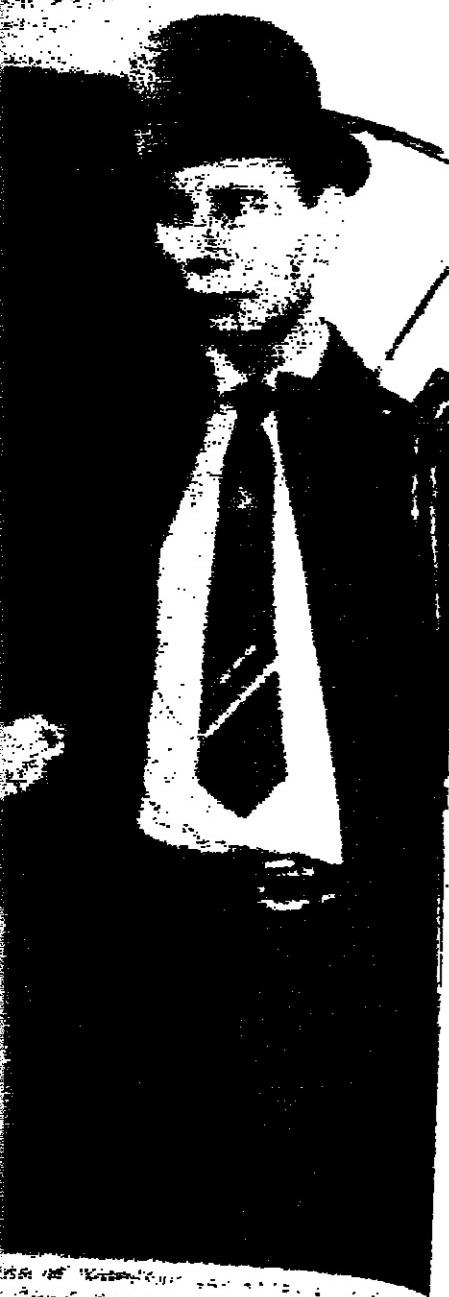
Mr Evans, 29, left Broadcaster House at 10am, refusing to speak about the incident which began when he decided to treat his production team to a Christmas lunch which lasted until early Thursday morning.

When he failed to turn up for work at 4.30am, Thursday's early morning DJ, Clive Warren, stayed on air while a deputy was roused to take over the show.

Yesterday Mr Evans returned to the airwaves in wise-cracking style and joked about missing the programme. "It's so good to be back, I feel like I've had a holiday in Bermuda – although it was more expensive than a week in Bermuda, obviously," he told listeners.

Mr Warren also made a dig at the errant star while signing off his early-morning show. "Do you want me to do another half-hour," he joked. "No problem, it's the same price as yesterday. Has he turned up yet?"

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international

Spiritual struggle: Tibet's exiled spiritual leader warns China against harming his choice for Panchen Lama

Dalai Lama points finger at Peking

TIM McGIRK
Dharamsala, India

If the Dalai Lama ever had occasion to lose his temper, it is with the Chinese these days. Helpless in Indian exile, the Dalai Lama, considered by Tibetans to be a compassionate, living Buddha, has seen the Chinese arrest a six-year-old boy he had discovered through his mystical powers to be the reincarnation of another high Tibetan lama.

Instead, the Chinese Communists enthroned their own candidate as Panchen Lama on 8 December, in a violation of ancient ritual that might be compared to the Archbishop of Canterbury being chosen by Chelsea football fans.

So does the Dalai Lama get mad about this?

"Mad? No, irritated, sometimes. But that passes. Sometimes I also feel like laughing. People see everything too seriously," said the Dalai Lama. His laughter is deep, resonant, like brass notes from a long Tibetan trumpet which resound from one of the Buddhist monasteries near the Dalai Lama's exile abode in the pine forests of the Himalayan foothills.

He lives in a simple colonial bungalow above Dharamsala. Every day Western converts to Buddhism, their faces bright with the cold, join old Tibetan women, their hair plaited with turquoise nuggets in circling the Dalai Lama's home. But not all such pilgrims are harmless.

Indian police, responsible for the Dalai Lama's security, arrested two Tibetan men and a woman on 21 November on charges of spying for China. "Obviously, the Chinese send a lot of people to collect information on us, but they usually break down and talk," said Tashi Wangdi, foreign minister

Cheoky Nima. The nomad boy and his parents were seized by security Chinese last May in Nagchu district and have not been seen again. "We know he's not in his birthplace. Some say he's being held in Chengdu or Peking. From all we've heard, this young boy is very brilliant and sharp-minded." The Dalai Lama said he was afraid the child might be branded as troublesome and vanish into a psychiatric clinic where he would be dulled with drugs.

They had received weapons training in the Chinese army. Detailed maps of Dharamsala and photographs of the Dalai Lama's senior advisers were also unearthed by security officials. "The two spies were to be told of their real mission later on, from someone coming from Tibet," said Mr Wangdi.



Contenders: Tibet's lost boy, Gedhun Cheoky Nima, six (left); Peking's choice is Gyaincain Norbu, also six

who thinks the Dalai Lama might have been a possible target for assassination.

The Dalai Lama agreed. "I'm not much worried. But at the same time, my life is so linked with the Tibetan issue that there is some basis for these fears," he told the *Independent*, in his first interview with British newspaper since Tibet's exiled god-king emerged from a three-week retreat of meditation that coincided with the Chinese enthronement of the rival Panchen Lama.

He is more worried about the fate of his reborn Panchen Lama, who died in January 1989, may

have been secretly killed by the Chinese. Many Tibetans dismissed the Panchen Lama as a Peking puppet, but in the last months of his life he became increasingly critical of China's occupation of Tibet. "Many of the Panchen Lama's close entourage believe he was murdered," the Dalai Lama said.

Shortly before the Panchen Lama left Peking for Tibet before his death, he is said to have engaged the highest-ranking Communist leaders in a heated argument. "Before his final departure to Lhasa, his personal bodyguard and physician were changed," Tibet's exiled leader said. Two days after a speech in which he openly castigated Chinese repression in Tibet, the Panchen Lama was stricken by chest pains.

"That night he called the doctor, but in the version we heard, it was a Chinese nurse who came. She gave him an injection and he fell into a coma. Tibetans said he was dead by sunrise." The Chinese say the Panchen Lama suffered a heart attack and died that afternoon.

"I feel a special moral responsibility to make sure that this boy - my Panchen Lama - is all right," said the Dalai Lama. Despite the meddling by Chinese Communists in the mystical Buddhist rites of finding a high lama, the Dalai Lama is still willing to talk to Peking. "As soon as any positive signal comes from Peking, I'm ready to talk without any pre-conditions. There's been no change in my 'middle road' approach. We don't necessarily want Tibet's complete separation from China." As for the Panchen Lama chosen by the Chinese, the Dalai Lama joked:

"He's one Tibetan child who'll

get the opportunity for a decent education - they'll probably spoil him terribly."



Temple guard: A trainee monk outside Peking's largest Tibetan Buddhist temple. The Chinese have clashed with the Dalai Lama over the selection of the Panchen Lama

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Experts astounded anyone survived jetliner crash

PHIL DAVISON
Latin America Correspondent

"When I saw the pieces of aeroplane around me, it dawned on me we had had an accident," said Gonzalo Dussan. "But I didn't know what exactly had happened."

What Mr Dussan, a 37-year-old Colombian immigrant working in the United States, did not realise was that he had been lying on a freezing mountainside for at least eight hours after the crash of American Airlines flight 965.

Strapped to a stretcher with his face blackened by smoke, Mr Dussan told a television crew he recalled sitting with his family on the aircraft as it came in to land in his native country. "The next thing I remember I was getting up from the ground with a pain in my shoulder, then my head and hands hurt and I felt terribly cold."

Aviation experts who initially assumed no one could have survived the disintegration of the jetliner were astounded. They

were trying to find out where the survivors were sitting and how they were catapulted free. Colombian army and civil rescue helicopters did not reach the crash site until early yesterday, more than eight hours after the plane hit the mountain around 10pm on Wednesday night.

The other two known survivors were students Mercedes Ramirez, 21, and Mauricio Reyes, 19, both returning to their native country for Christmas from US universities.

Among the victims was the pilot, 57-year-old Nicholas Tafuri of Florida, who had been with American Airlines for 26 years, flown 10,000 hours, was a regular on Boeing 757s and knew the mountainous approach to Cali airport well. "He was always the guy standing at the door, talking to the little old ladies as they got on and off a fellow pilot said yesterday."

Investigators who recovered

China adds to its legal armoury

TERESA POOLE
Washington

Legislation specifying when martial law can be imposed is to be adopted by the Chinese government, in line with President Jiang Zemin's pronouncement this week that political and social stability is crucial for the country's development.

China's Criminal Procedure Law is also being revised as part of the crackdown on crime, making requirements for arrest "less strict", lengthening the time a suspect can be held without charge, but also giving defendants earlier access to a lawyer. The draft bill appears designed to provide a legal underpinning to existing government and police powers.

The image of China's legal system was tarnished further last week when Wei Jingsheng, the prominent dissident, was jailed for 14 years after being detained without charge for almost 20 months. Yesterday Mr Wei formally filed an appeal against the verdict and sentence, but his chance of success is nil.

The sentence meted out for Mr Wei and the martial law legislation suggest the government is nervous about the potential for social unrest. But diplomats also welcomed Peking's attempt

to spell out more detail for such laws, albeit in a country in which legal theory and practice are often far apart.

The draft martial law says a curfew can be imposed "in the event of turmoil, riots or severe disturbances likely to endanger national unity, safety or public security". Inevitably all such moves are seen in the context of an increasingly frail paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, 91, whose death is forecast by many analysts as likely to prompt a prolonged power struggle among the top leaders.

The changes to the judicial system are part of attempts to make court procedures more transparent, though the revisions are heavily weighted in favour of the police. Under the rewritten law, the time a suspect can be detained without formal arrest will be increased from 10 to 30 days. It remains to be seen whether this is implemented, given Mr Wei's 20-month detention before charge. Without specifying exactly how the law will also make arrest requirements "less strict", to aid the crime crackdown.

On the other side, defendants will be able to seek a lawyer's help much earlier. Under the existing rules, lawyers could join proceedings only seven days before a trial.

IN BRIEF

Spanish officer dies in car-bomb blast

Leon - A Spanish army major, Luciano Cortizo Alvaro, 44, was killed and his 18-year-old daughter Beatriz lost a leg and part of an arm when a bomb believed to have been planted by Basque ETA separatists exploded under his car while it was stopped at an intersection. It was the third fatal attack in 11 days attributed to ETA. AP

Clinton blow

Washington - The US Senate voted to join the House of Representatives in overriding President Bill Clinton's veto of a controversial bill aimed at curtailing investors' ability to sue for securities fraud - the first override of Mr Clinton's presidency. Reuter

Cult suicide fear

Geneva - Investigations into the sudden disappearance of 16 people linked to the Order of the Solar Temple doomsday cult have turned up notes hinting at another mass suicide. Swiss police fear a sequel to the mass suicide-murder in Switzerland and Canada last year, in which cult members, leaders and children were killed. AP

Pakistan reward

Peshawar - Pakistani police offered the equivalent of £18,000 for information leading to the arrest of people behind a bomb which killed 36 people on Thursday. Suspicion has fallen on Afghans, as well as Egyptian militants who have threatened Pakistan. Reuter

Hijacker to die

Hong Kong - A Chinese court sentenced Chen Wenjian, 20, to death for the hijacking last June of the Macau to Hong Kong hydrofoil and the robbery of currency worth £844,000, reports said. AP

Christmas cheers

Bethlehem - Ushering in the first Christmas celebrations under Palestinian rule, Soha Arafat, the Christian wife of the PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, switched on the lights of a Christmas tree in Manger Square to the cheers of thousands of Palestinians. AP

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Jo I

Oh what fun it is to have Christmas every day

Andy Park (and his dog) are Yuletide crazy. He never takes down the lights, eats turkey every day and gets through 2,400 mince pies a year.

Paul Vallely went a-calling

At the last minute I realised I hadn't bought a present. It was Christmas Day, to all intents and purposes, and all that was available on Paddington Station were the usual standby offerings: a box of Cadbury's Roses, a silk tie with a morose-looking Santa surrounded by present-demanding kids, and a pair of green socks with Rudolf the Reindeer on.

The tie was £9.99 and the socks were £4.99. I bought the socks, a sheet of wrapping paper and a little roll of Sellotape and jumped on the train to the West Country.

For anyone else, the socks would have been a once-a-year novelty. But Andy Park could wear them whenever he wanted. He is the man who celebrates Christmas every day.

This is serious stuff. Andy lives alone - "of course", he later added in revealing parentheses. He would have to: this is the man who in the course of his normal year gets through 2,400 mince pies, 100 bottles of sherry and 26 turkeys (he makes each one last a fortnight - "roast, then stew and curry and then soup"). His home is permanently draped in streamers and banners proclaiming Seasons' Greetings. A Christmas tree stands like an unblinking sentinel in the corner of his living-room, and flashing lights pulsate all year round across the mantelpiece. Even his hapless dog, Pickles, sports a constant collar of tinsel. Andy Park lives with the tinnitus of the modern Christmas unceasing in his ears.

I left the train at Chippenham and took a taxi to Melksham. The driver, Stan, of Stan's Taxis, who was 80, was musing about only having one booking for Monday. He

intended to work normally on Christmas Day, he said; it was because he was religious.

"It's not about Christ. It's just Saturnalia."

Strictly speaking the Roman time for merrymaking and the exchange of gifts was 17 December, but we got the point. Stan was obviously a churchgoer.

"No, I never go to church.

The churches always get everything wrong. I just read the Bible. It's obvious, anyway, that Christ was not born at Christmas. There were shepherds in the fields, which there wouldn't be at that time of year. And John the Baptist, who was six months older, was born in the spring. So Jesus was born at Michaelmas. It's obvious, isn't it? Anyway, the Bible says there is only one day we should commemorate, and that's the Last Supper: 'Do this in memory of me.'

"Mind you," said Stan, his logic suddenly changing tack, "if they are going to put up decorations they should be up all the time, not just for 12 days. Jesus came to save the world: putting decorations up for a few days is a bit belittling, isn't it? They should leave them up all the year round."

Andy Park would agree with that. He has had his decorations up for seven years now. As we arrived at the little terraced house on a new estate in the centre of Melksham we saw that he has even had a Santa painted on his satellite dish.

Inside, Andy was doing a bit of maintenance on the flashing lights, which he had temporarily removed from the window. The rest of us may have to wonder every year when we get the box down from the attic whether the tree lights will work; not Andy, he

just fixes them when they bust. It is an expensive business: this perpetual Christmas. Andy reckons he spends an extra £1,000 a year on electricity, £400 on decorations and £300 on flashing lights maintenance (they are on eight hours a day on average). Then there is

caricature that is Andy Park's interminable Yuletide says something about the more general paradigm of Christmas, which is nowadays accepted with only nominal objection.

His relentless wassail is merely a *reductio ad absurdum* of the way we all behave.

"I love parties, big ones - I

hire halls; but I also have small ones at home all the time. Christmas parties all year round. On the *Longest Day* I have a really big one. This year we had 300 people and 30 pipers playing 'Silent Night' on the lawn."

What do the neighbours think? "They love it. They join in. Sometimes they come carol-singing in June because they know I'll invite them in for sherry, though I make them sing the whole song through properly first."

Could this be true? There were no neighbours around to ask. They were all at work.

Andy was the only one at home.

His job is selling reconditioned cookers and fridges, which he advertises in the local paper: "It means I can work at any time of day. Christmas is no problem to me. People ring up desperate for a cooker on

Christmas Eve and I can sort them out. Last year I went out at 9am on Christmas morning to wire one up after an emergency call from a woman with a big turkey on her hands and no oven."

If he transfers his festive spirit to his work, the process is not one-way. He is a bit of a dealer when it comes to Christmas gifts: "I give about 250 presents a year - if people pop round I've usually got something for them. So I get stuff in job lots: 20 things for the price of 10. I do deals all the time. I've got a loft full of wrapping paper I bought last year."

All this ceaseless frolicking began seven years ago, when he found himself living alone. "I was divorced, of course." Of course. "And I thought the place looked so good with the decs up, I decided to leave them there." Friends repeated the old superstition about misfortune following if the trappings of festivity were not removed when Twelfth Night was done. "They said I would have bad luck, but I've never had none. I love my life. It has no stress."

Not that he just leaves "the decs" there. "I change them

every three months or so, because they start to look a bit fragile. I stock up at Christmas so I have plenty for the year. My niece Diana, is coming round tomorrow to clean them all with a feather duster."

There are no problems with dropping needles, of course,

Till change the tree soon because the snow is getting grimy'

because the tree, like all the rest of the greenery, is artificial. "Your real tree doesn't last and you can't get a new one in the summer. This one's been up for two-and-a-half years, though I'm going to change it soon because its artificial snow is getting grimy." What the 8th-century English missionary St Boniface would think does not bear reflection: he started the Christmas tree tradition by cutting one for German pagans as a symbol of life.

Still, Andy keeps in step with tradition over what Shakespeare called "the baleful mistletoe". Baleful, perhaps, because it was said to have been the branch used to kill Balder, the Scandinavian god of light, or because of its links with Druidic human sacrifice. Andy's mistletoe is baleful too; it is plastic.

Over lunch in a local pub, where he dithered over version but finally settled on turkey, we began to get more philosophical. Can things be defined without a context? I asked.

"What?" he replied. Well, just as life is made purposeful and poignant by death, isn't it?

Annual events given meaning by the quotidian days which surround it? "Not really. On 25 December I feel even better because everyone else has decided to join me in Christmas, everyone is in a party mood." He videos the Queen's Speech for playing back during the months to come.

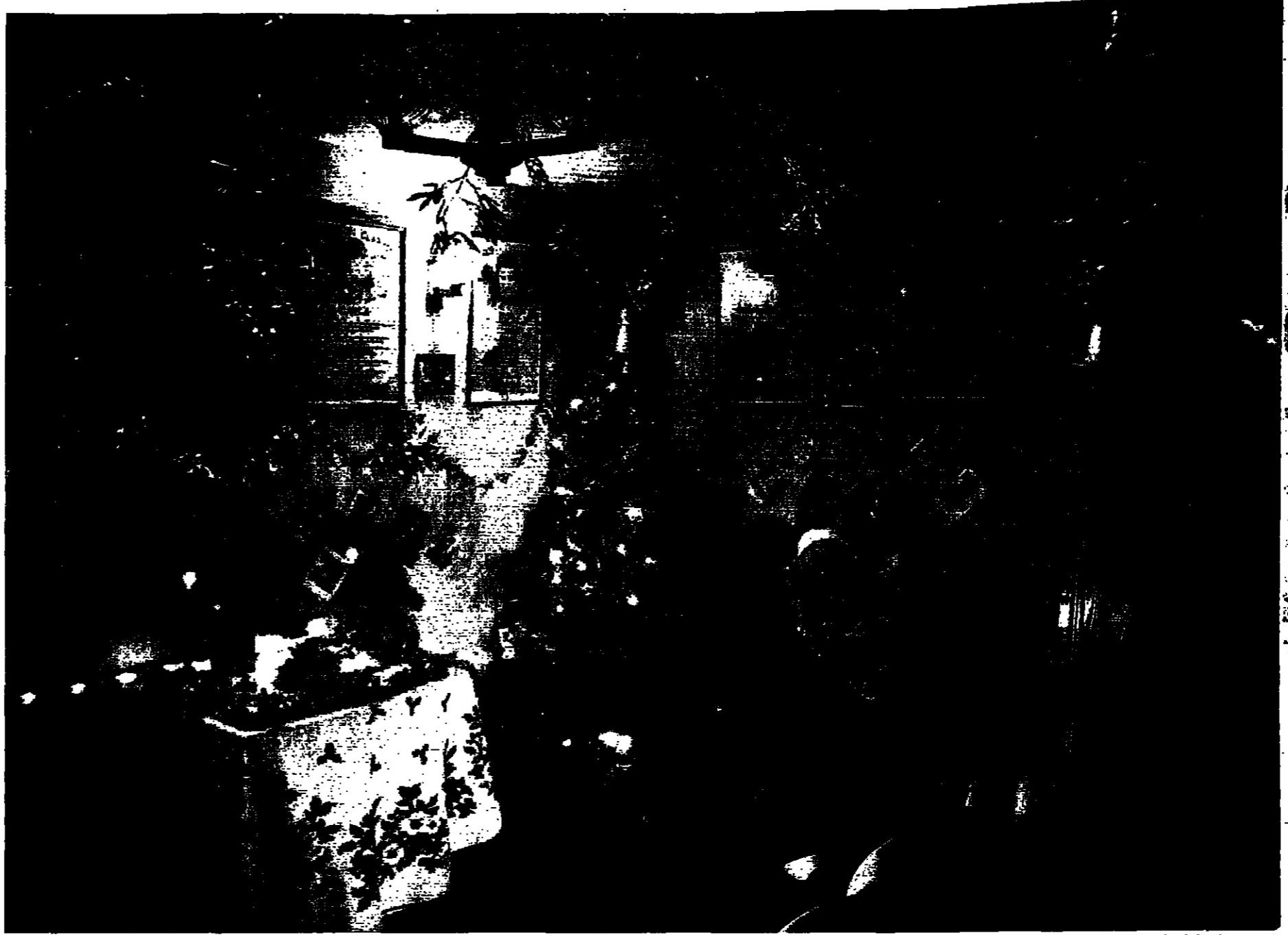
There is, however, no crib among the seasonal adornments. "I was brought up RC, but I don't go much now. I'm as happy with the Methodists or Spiritualists. But for me, Christmas is mainly to do with festivities and atmosphere. My two favourite cards are 'Silent Night' and 'Lonely This Christmas', by Mud - you must know it; it was a Number One in the Seventies." In emulation, Andy this year recorded his own Christmas record, "Yule-tide, Yeah", which he describes as a bluegrass disco dance track. "Wiggle your bum, toast the day, the Yuletide way," say the lyrics, though sadly he sent it to EMI a month too late for a Christmas pressing.

"It's a time of rest. Christmas, really, isn't it." Andy summed up, thoughtfully, "watching the telly... *Noel's House Party*... *Top of the Pops*."

It is also, I pointed out, the peak time for loneliness, suicides, family quarrels, divorces, depression and drunkenness.

"Well, we don't really want to dwell on that do we?" he replied.

Above the little town of Melksham too the silent stars go by. Yet in the dark streets there shone, as I left, only the lights in the shopping centre. Andy Park is currently campaigning for the town council to keep the Christmas illuminations up all year. The promise of everlasting light, I fear, meant something altogether different.



Another day, another Christmas for Andy Park and Pickles. On Monday, though, the rest of the country will be joining in

Photograph: John Lawrence

Jo Brand's week



I was alarmed to read this week that our national heroine, Kate Adie, has been injured in Sarajevo. A lone sniper, perhaps? Sharpnel wounds? Or maybe brave Kate stood in front of a tank to protect small children? Nope, she slipped on ice and broke her ankle. That must have been galling: even Martin Bell got a bullet. Still, she's tucked up in a private hospital, but she still needs to keep her wits about her given that hygiene is probably controlled by the cleaning firm that costs the least. Let's hope Kate can bypass slippery floors and sidestep bacteria, not to mention the damage to her wallet (£30 an aspirin in some of these places, you know). Let's hope Kate is back on her feet very soon because, Kate, to paraphrase Bupa, you're amazing and we want you to stay that way.

Likewise Salman Rushdie has been in trouble while on a tour of Australia, sustaining injuries not from a fundamentalist Muslim, but in a car crash. Not many get-well cards coming from Iran, I expect.

I turned on the telly the other night to be confronted with a naked couple writhing about in happy abandon. Assuming it was part of *Sex with Paula*, I was surprised to discover it was in fact an advertisement for Accurist watches, the writhing couple being accompanied by the throaty

statement: "A man who gives an Accurist this Christmas deserves everything he gets." A good seeing-to, apparently. This ad was followed in the next break by an almost identical ad, apart from the fact that a negative had been inserted. Despite similar writhing going on, the woman is revealed as a bit of an old hag, thus demonstrating that if you don't give an Accurist you will end up in bed with an ugly old slapper. Good God almighty, is Biff Bacon writing the copy for ads these days? Ironic it may well be, but funny it isn't, although no doubt it will appeal to that brain-dead section of the population whose personalities have deserted them and have been replaced by expensive clothes and 23-hour stints in the gym.

Along the same lines, we are informed by the advertisers that the reason most people don't drink Martini is because they feel too ugly. That's obviously why I haven't



Salman Rushdie: in the wars

attempt to talk to our friends in Europe. Operation Resolute Rat, which is currently taking place in Bosnia, is unfortunate in that "rat" in that particular area translates as "war". Perhaps not the best way to kick off a cordial relationship between Nato and the former Yugoslavians. Better, I suppose though, than the Bosnian general who was heard, while the peace negotiations were going on, to remark that they were searching for the final solution. Oh dear.

When I was younger and more naive I couldn't understand why some people argued that prison was not a deterrent. It certainly looked it to me. Similarly, I could not understand why some people could possibly want to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

Having worked in the community I came to realise that some people's homes were so terrible that a break in hospital was looked upon as a bit of a treat.

Given the current outcry about Holloway, it appears not even basic human dignity is being maintained. Most of us have never been inside a prison and our version of it is a mixture of Cell Block H and snippets from the news, where of course we didn't see the frustration and neglect.

A while ago I did a comedy show inside Holloway, organised by another comedian. We were kept well away from the main bit of the prison and

although everything was done to prevent us really getting a picture of how things were, the nature of the heckling gave us all some idea of the anger and desperation that existed.

The show itself was a bit of a disaster, because it was obviously so rare to gather outside the cells that all the women just wanted to have a chat and pretty much ignored us. At one point I felt I was performing to three hundred women who were doing time for murdering a fat woman comic. The main problem appeared to be a lack of staff, causing long periods of isolation for most inmates. A huge sense of relief flooded over me when the doors clunked shut behind us. Prison is still a deterrent for me.



Holloway: I was glad to get out

I did some publicity photos today and spent quite some time being made up, which is great because I am so hopeless at putting my own make-up on. In fact, the make-up woman did a good job and I was beginning to think I didn't look half bad. As I left the studio feeling rather smug, I heard an old bloke on the gate say to his friend, "There goes that fat girl off the telly." Cue ... deflation.

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Even a Pocahontas Christmas is a chance to dream

When pagans celebrated the mid-winter solstice, they had no pangs of conscience. They slaughtered a few animals, mixed up something hot and alcoholic and settled down to having a good time. True, they might have been plagued by the in-laws, difficult children and terrible hangovers, but the British Flintstones knew what the festival was about. They were ready for a break after months of freezing weather and more to come. The December feast was a chance for a change, an opportunity to feel good in the bleak mid-winter. People knew that they would have to return to the gloom, but at least they felt a warm glow for a while. In short, the celebration was a pleasant and worthwhile distraction from the misery of the damp and cold.

These days, we're nothing like as clear about what Christmas means. We torment ourselves with guilt, at the vast amount of spending, at all the food and the drink consumed. There is a sense of shame about it, a feeling that the paganism of the modern day is obscene and somehow should be abandoned. Each year, we carry on with the annual binge, and then we hate ourselves for it. For a few days, we all know that it is to be the Princess of Wales.

And then there is the navel-gazing over the supposed hypocrisy of Christmas. Cynics decry the bonhomie. They dismiss the cheer that mysteriously appears in the third week of December, and disappears as quickly by the first week in January as misanthropy dominates once

again. There is also, as our letters' column has recently revealed, endless concern about whether or not children should be told the truth about Santa Claus. "We're damaging them by telling them lies," warns the anti-fantasy brigade. Meanwhile, the self-righteous look accusingly at church attendances and suggest that people lack sincerity, that they treat churches as theme parks, turning up for the Christmas Eve carol service never to darken a church door for the rest of the year.

All of these phenomena - the over-indulgence and the brief flirtation with church-going - lead many to think that Christmas is a rather sad exercise in empty consumerism, superficial religiosity and insincere philanthropy. Would it not be better if there were no Christmas at all?

To ask that question is to begin to reveal the modern meaning of the event. It is, like the pagan feast, a chance to live out a collective fantasy, an opportunity to imagine a different, sunnier world. The fact that that world disappears soon after does not make its invocation a waste of time.

For children the collective fantasy centres on Santa, a virtual deity, who loves all children and makes a trip to every home. He is an utterly benign figure. Suggesting his existence is not a lie; it is giving a child a chance to dream. The Santa image, and its notion of no-string-attached giving, is important in helping children have a sense of their own intrinsic value.



So what about the adult collective fantasy: the idea that we all love each other according to the principles of Christianity? All right, so we don't. And we never did. There is no point in feeling nostalgic if Christianity had ever really dictated everyday behaviour, the history of the world would have been very different.

No one really believes that their old differences have suddenly dissolved at Christmas. We are meant to play along with the fantasy of Christmas, a bit like children who already know the truth about Santa. It does no harm to mark a few days in the year at a time when everyone takes the goodwill tablet. Who knows, like Turkey, people might begin to fancy it all year around.

The Royal Family does not seem to have grasped this tradition. Princess Diana and the Queen, fighting to make their candidates King (Willis in Diana's case, Charles in the Queen's) could not let matters rest until January amid Yuletide good humour. So the Princess refused to turn up at Sandringham for Christmas and the Queen ordered a divorce, five days before Christmas Day. The spirit of Christmas does not seem quite to have reached the Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

Speaking of religion, Christian images are not as prevalent as they once were. Characters from *The Lion King* have replaced religious pictures on chocolate advent calendars. A plastic figure of Pocahontas is as sacred as a relic would once have been from Santiago de Com-

postela: Walt Disney is establishing a monopoly of the supernatural. We are also living in a period when fame, power and wealth create the elect, those apparently heading for the right life. Grace, honour and sanctity are conferred more by the camera than by good works.

But Christianity, at this time of the year, does still have a powerful message. To believers, Christmas represents a new beginning of unique impact on the world, the birth of a saviour for the human race. But even to those who do not believe, the season's message contradicts conventional values. What is splendid about Christianity is that it says the woman who makes Nike shoes on a Third World poverty wage is as important and valuable as the woman who endorses them for a huge fee. And the focus of worship at Christmas is not some great powerful, authority figure in a sharp suit, with loads of money and few scruples. It is, instead, a picture of helplessness, a needy baby. This is an image that emphasises the idea of renewal, going back to the pagan origins of the festival.

In short, it is never going to be Christmas every day. The whole point of it is to enjoy a special time, think and believe afresh, even by Twelfth Night we'll be back to where we were on Christmas Eve. So follow the example of the Flintstones. Set aside the guilt, enjoy the feast, try being nice to people and let a little hypocrisy pass unremarked. The harsh winds of January are not far away.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Diana: betrayed, sidelined or ... awkward?

From Mrs Jennifer Miller

Sir: In your editorial "Divorce is the only answer for a modern age" (22 December), you unquestioningly accept that the Royal Family has sought to marginalise and exclude Princess Diana.

When she married, her own grandmother, Lady Fermoy, has been established at Court for years on the staff of the Queen Mother, whose close personal friend she was. Diana's brother-in-law was already a private secretary to the Queen, and her father, Earl Spencer, had been a royal equerry. She always had her own relatives and contracts within the royal household and cannot have been isolated as she now claims.

On her separation, Buckingham Palace announced that the Princess would still be invited to Balmoral and Sandringham, but even at Christmas 1992, she caused immense trouble by refusing to visit Sandringham, making it seem as if she were cruelly kept from her children at such a time.

When Diana wanted to resume public life, the Queen agreed last year that her daugh-

ter-in-law should take on the prestigious role of spearheading celebrations for the 125th anniversary of the British Red Cross. During 1995 Diana has visited Russia, Japan, Hong Kong, Venice and Argentina, and travelled several times to the United States. Does this look like being sidelined?

The Prince of Wales gives Diana such a generous allowance that in May she was identified as a "Super A" shopper, one of a small group of really high-rolling consumers.

Yours faithfully,
JENNIFER MILLER
London SW15
22 December

From Mr Robert Readman

Sir: In advising (ordering) the Prince and Princess of Wales to divorce, the Queen and her advisors have seriously underestimated the depth of support for the Princess of Wales.

The Prince of Wales has betrayed his wife from the outset of his marriage. He now seeks to cast aside a woman who is 10 times the man that he is, obtain public approval for his mistress and still ascend the throne to become "Defender of

the Faith". For Prince Charles, as a divorcee, to become King would be an act of monumental hypocrisy, not only on his part but on the part of the Archbishop who places the crown upon his head.

The Royal Establishment, in its desperate attempt to shore up its crumbling edifice, is thrashing about in a frantic effort to preserve itself. But sidelining Princess Diana will only serve to further erode the Monarchy in the eyes of the people.

If Buckingham Palace cannot recognise that Diana is the real jewel in the Crown, it does not deserve the support and respect of the country.

Sincerely,
ROBERT READMAN
Sandbanks, Dorset
21 December

From Mr Gerard M Blair

Sir: Given the continuing troubles between the Prince and Princess of Wales, it seems unfortunate that they were unable to talk with President Clinton during his recent visit.

Yours faithfully
GERARD M BLAIR
West Linton, Borders
21 December

Ranting about European monetary union

From Mr Christopher Haskins

Sir: Hamish McRae is perfectly entitled to be against European monetary union ("Why the ranters are right about EMU", 22 December). But he himself is beginning to rant when he brands as "stupid" those who believe in the idea - the leaders of 14 out of the 15 members.

Throughout the development of the European movement its supporters have been berated in this way, yet time and again they have proved correct. What's different this time?

Of course the implementation of monetary union is fraught with institutional and fiscal difficulties. But the tide of history is running towards greater economic as well as political harmony between states, and EMU is part of that process.

The need for the transfer of funds from the better-off to the less well-off regions of the Community is well-established, and will be reinforced in the future because of both EMU and enlargement. The idea that the United States economy only works because the population is perpetually on the move is a bit far-fetched.

So, we come back to the issue of devaluation - the last resort instrument that has plagued the British economy since the War. EMU most cer-

tainly rules that option out in the future - one of the strongest reasons for supporting it!

With the same exception of the United Kingdom, the European political leaders continue to show imagination and courage in pressing on with EMU, despite the obstacles.

They most certainly are not being stupid.

Yours faithfully
CHRISTOPHER HASKINS
Chairman
Northern Foods
Hull, East Yorkshire
21 December

From Mr Andrea Casalotti

Sir: Hamish McRae's attack on European monetary union rests on the fallacy that governments can fine-tune the economy by fiscal and monetary policies. The best a government can do is give a simple inflation rule to an independent central bank, and then work on decreasing the inefficiencies in the system.

It is a region suffering economically, lowering the world prices of its products (by devaluation, for instance) is rarely going to work. It is by increasing the quality and uniqueness of its output that prosperity will be found. Look at the difference in quality of manufactures from a strong currency country like Germany and those from a weak currency country like Britain.

The debate in Germany over economic performance is not about the strength of the mark but about the loss of innovation. Germans know that future growth is guaranteed not by making the same products cheaper but by making them better. Britain will not stop its century old decline until it understands this.

Yours sincerely,
ANDREA CASALOTTI
London, NW1
21 December

From Mr Henry Brownrigg

Sir: There is a lot to be said for Europa's bull as a motif on the Euro (letter, 20 December). It is a lot jollier than the very anodyne alternatives now being considered. And as a rapist, its symbolism would certainly seem appropriate from the standpoint of, say, the British fishing industry. Perhaps, on the other side of the coin we could have Señor Portillo dressed as a matador.

Yours faithfully,
HENRY BROWNREIGG
London, SW5
21 December

DAVID AARONOVITCH

Faith value



Claire Rayner ("Darling, of course you're anxious, but nobody will thank you for getting involved. Have you thought about Prozac?")

My own preference would be for Charles to eschew religion altogether. The historical imperatives behind the establishment of the Church of England have now been exhausted. We do not need a replacement.

But for some time now, I have been uncomfortably aware that this rationalist viewpoint is increasingly unfashionable. Where previously Christians and other Deists used to keep quiet for fear of ridicule, today's drier parties are dominated by bold confessions of faith.

Only a few weeks ago, two very good friends of mine proudly told an animated group of media folk that they were experiencing immense benefit from "psychic massage". I got ready for a really good scoff (how does the masseur get his fingers through your ears, that kind of thing), until I realised that everyone else was taking it seriously.

The general impression conveyed is that the Russian establishment, still immature, did not really know what it was doing, but how can it be that comfortable Western journalists know better?

Russia's choice was Communism. It appears that the party was believed when it described as "deforms" the reforms that so obsess Western commentators. After a taste of capitalism, it is so strange that the average Russian citizen does not like it: the joblessness, poverty, vast social inequalities, corruption, crime, violence, prostitution, national humiliation?

Russians are not used to these things. Perhaps it is simply that they are not as "realistic" as we are in the West.

Yours,
DAVID MORGAN
London, W5
21 December

I can tolerate the Church in its place; doing good works, preaching tolerance and maintaining cathedrals. But dressing up in silly hats and carrying funny sticks, like extras in a bad remake of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, or intoning platitudinous rubbish in a sing-song voice does not, in my opinion, qualify you for a major role in deciding the constitutional future of the nation. If the Queen wanted good advice, she should have consulted

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Apart from a few set-piece debates, the Chamber of the House of Commons is dead and to a large extent irrelevant. It is no longer the forum of the nation - Lord Weatherill, former Speaker

For me, the currency of deep caring at a painful time such as this is silence - Frances Shand-Kydd, the Princess of Wales's mother

The Royal Family would be a bargain if we paid them twice as much - Kenneth Baker, former Home Secretary

Now Santa Claus is descended, we'll work on God next - Merle Hoffman, feminist, on New York's first female Father Christmas

She was a very nice girl, but Father Christmas should be big and fat and jolly. She didn't say 'ho, ho, ho' once - Helen Doherty, on Mother Christmas at a council-run grotto in Luton

This guy was the original soap scriptwriter. I was amazed by the outrageousness of the characters and situations and the pitch of the drama - Darren Star, creator of American soap operas including *Beverly Hills 90210*, on Charles Dickens

When things go wrong, Antarctica is one of the cruellest, most unforgiving places on Earth - Roger Mear, who abandoned his solo unsupported crossing of the Antarctic due to bad weather conditions and problems with his sledge

Why drug killings threaten ceasefire

From Mr Sean Kearney

Sir: David McKitterick's article "How the guns kept drugs out of Belfast" (31 December) states that everyone relaxes after a murder when it becomes clear that "the incident represents no threat to the ceasefires". In our experience, far from relaxing, everyone is greatly apprehensive after the recent murders, and few accept that they are not a breach of the ceasefire.

Mr McKitterick writes that "in the Republican districts, where drugs were taking hold, many people openly approved of this violence." A minority of people can be found to approve of the most dastardly deeds, but for everyone who approves there are three victims and their families who strongly disapprove.

Our view is that the IRA and its loyalist counterparts are guilty of the vilest human rights abuses, and the latest murders, leaving 10 children without fathers at Christmas, amount to an atrocity. To excuse these murders on social grounds is akin to arguing that the Nazis introduced law and order to a society that lacked it in the Thirties. The IRA would impose a similar regime here in Northern Ireland. We call on all right-thinking people to reject violence unequivocally.

Yours sincerely,

SEAN KEARNEY
Families Against Intimidation and Terror
Belfast
22 December

Dry measure

From Mr Michael D Mitchell

Sir: I can tell Simon Martin (Letters, 18 December) why the Government won't make alcohol available on prescription. It's because prescriptions are so ruddy expensive that nobody would drink anything, and toy coffers would be even emptier than they are already. Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL D. MITCHELL
Blackwell Heath,
Buckinghamshire

From Mr Stewart Campbell

Sir: Astronomers should stick to astronomy: interpretation of the Bible is best left to those who understand it ("Christmas Star shines in a cosmic ballet", Science, 28 November).

Dionysius Exiguus did not make a mistake in his calculations and Jesus probably was born in BC.

The stories of Jesus' birth are all invented, as is any association with Herod the Great.

The Star too is an invention, probably deriving from Levi

19-3 and the Talmud, which predicted that "when the Messiah is to be revealed a star will rise in the east..." It may also echo the story of the birth of Mithras where a star fell from the sky and was followed by Zoroastrian priests called "Magi" on their way to worship the newly born god.

Astronomers look for a celestial sign that existed only in the imagination of the evangelists.

Yours faithfully

STEWART CAMPBELL
Edinburgh
19 December

Boxed Broadway

From Professor Peter Smith

Sir: May I add a footnote to Sue Rolfe's letter (21 December) about the Theatre Museum's archival videotape collection of stage productions?

A similar archive can be found at the New York Public Library branch at Lincoln Center, where the kind of unions-permitted recording she describes has been taking

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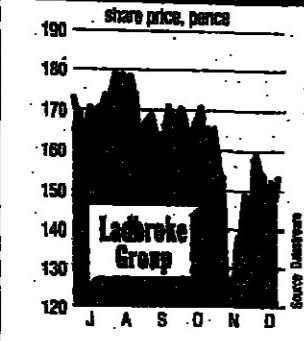
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SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Bass JAS BOND Share Price

Speculators plump for Ladbroke as a stocking-filler

Speculators, wondering whether any takeover presents were still tucked away, again alighted on Ladbroke, the betting and hotel group, as the market went through the motions of completing a half-day's pre-Christmas trading.

In a record-breaking year for takeovers - worth £70bn at the last count - the temptation to find another winner enlivened what by tradition is an uneventful session.

Ladbroke has been a late runner in the market's takeover stakes. It came to the fore early this month when rumours flowed that Bass, the brewing and hotel giant, was preparing to strike.

Bass is still in the frame but it is another brewer, Whitbread, that has taken up the running. It splashed out £180m in August for 16 UK Marriott Hotels and is thought to be anxious to increase its hotel portfolio.

Ladbroke, through its Hilton chain, would provide an international spread, something dear to the heart of any ambitious hotelier. Whitbread could, however, run into problems reconciling the Marriott and Hilton set-ups.

Market punters are betting on Whitbread being unable to resist the opportunity of becoming a powerful international force and overcoming any branding difficulties.

With the market chitter revolving around Ladbroke's Hilton connections there has been little gossip about its betting operations. However, Whitbread's high street presence, Pizza Hut and Threshers, could indicate what it will stretch beyond its current peak, 3,680.4, next week.

Talk of a share buy-back brightened PowerGen, up 10p at 534p. British Aerospace, 6p higher at 785p, remained firm on Orange flotation prospects and talk of a GEC as-

sault. GEC gained 4.5p to 343p. British Gas slipped 1.5p to 256p. The controversial chief executive, Cedric Brown, through dividend reinvestment, has nudged up his shareholding to 31,691 shares.

Royal Bank of Scotland improved 5p to 573p. It has increased its influence in Banco Santander to 2.4 per cent. The Spanish bank has 9.89 per cent of Royal Bank.

Gestet, on its banana windfall, jumped 39p to 192p and Hillsdown managed a 6p advance to 166p.

BTR shaded to 317.5p; Salmon Brothers completed an 8.68 million trade at 316p from Redland's bid for Emenex.

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter
of the year

er at 152p, capitalising the company at £1.7bn. A warning that year's profits would be lower had driven them to 125p before the rumour mill came to their rescue.

Bass rose 18p to 703p and Whitbread 4p to 664p.

The rest of the market put on a festive display with Footsie finishing with a 25-point flourish at 3,658.3. Hopes continue that it will stretch beyond its current peak, 3,680.4, next week.

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Gestet, on its banana windfall, jumped 39p to 192p and Hillsdown managed a 6p advance to 166p.

BTR shaded to 317.5p; Salmon Brothers completed an 8.68 million trade at 316p from Redland's bid for Emenex.

Action continued among the bio-babies. ES Biomedics, raising £3.8m through a placing and open offer at 90p, rose a further 22p to 130p. Electrophoresis put on 20p to 172p after linking with a Ministry of Agriculture agency to research diagnosis of BSE.

Hartons, the plastics group, firmed to 8.25p as Schutteveld made a mandatory offer at 8.5p. The Dutch group picked up most of the shares on offer in a cash-raising exercise, lifting its stake to 53.1 per cent.

Crown Products, the games group that returned from suspension on Wednesday after putting through two acquisitions, said it has raised £100,000 by issuing shares at 50p. The price stuck at 53p.

OIS International Inspection held at 25p after rejecting the Abbot offer. Brumcliffe Aggregates drew strength from Redland's bid for Emenex.

gaining 3p to 22p. Raglan Property, seeking authority to include in share buy-back, gained 2.5p to 30p. Lifeshomes Assured Tenancies, a former Business Expansion Scheme residential property group, jumped 10p to 95p following the agreed 100p cash offer from Cosmopolitan Trade Ventures.

Reunion Mining suffered from a poorly received launch, falling 3p to 60p against Thursday's 80p opening.

Pex, a textile group, slipped 0.5p to 8.5p as the signalled £2.5m cash-raising exercise was mounted. Uniwear, a Belgian group run by Italian aristocrat Andrea Cattaneo Della Volta, is pumping £2m into the business and could end up with 44.4 per cent. Shares are being sold at 4.375p.

King & Shaxson, the discount house owning stockbrokers Greig Middleton and Allied Provincial, held at 141p.

TAKING STOCK

High-flying BTG, the old British Technology Group which came to market in July at 225p, could reach 1,500p in a year's time, Dr Ering Refsum of Yamaichi believes. The shares are 1,025p. With a portfolio of 9,000 patents relating to 1,300 inventions which have so far generated 470 licences, BTG is about

"to enter a decade of dramatically increasing cash flow and profitability". Adjusting for obvious risks involved in the group's spread of developments, Dr Refsum reckons the underlying market capitalisation could be £226m or even an astonishing £28m. Current value is £180m.

■ Cain Energy raised £5m placing shares through Société Générale Turnball. The cash will go towards developing its new Bangladesh field and other projects. The shares are 117p.

Stock	Var/100	Block	Vol/100	Stock	Var/100
Banks, Merchant					
Barclays	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Barclays	-1.5
Challenger	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Challenger	-1.5
ICI	-1.5	1,000	1,000	ICI	-1.5
Banks, Retail					
Barclays	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Barclays	-1.5
HSBC	-1.5	1,000	1,000	HSBC	-1.5
Leeds	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Leeds	-1.5
Midlands	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Midlands	-1.5
Santander	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Santander	-1.5
Standard Chartered	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Standard Chartered	-1.5
Westpac	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Westpac	-1.5
Breweries					
Acer	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Acer	-1.5
Amstel	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Amstel	-1.5
Brasier	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Brasier	-1.5
Carling	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Carling	-1.5
Carlsberg	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Carlsberg	-1.5
Heublein	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Heublein	-1.5
Levi	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Levi	-1.5
Marston	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Marston	-1.5
McVities	-1.5	1,000	1,000	McVities	-1.5
Miller	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Miller	-1.5
Perrier	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Perrier	-1.5
Smithwick's	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Smithwick's	-1.5
Stollwerck	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Stollwerck	-1.5
Thorn	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Thorn	-1.5
Diversified Industrials					
Admiral	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Admiral	-1.5
Anglo American	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo American	-1.5
Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Europe	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Europe	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
Anglo-Petroleum	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Petroleum	-1.5
Anglo-Suisse	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Suisse	-1.5
Anglo-American	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-American	-1.5
Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
Anglo-Suisse	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Suisse	-1.5
Anglo-American	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-American	-1.5
Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
Anglo-Suisse	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Suisse	-1.5
Anglo-American	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-American	-1.5
Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
Anglo-Suisse	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Suisse	-1.5
Anglo-American	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-American	-1.5
Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
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Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
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Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5
Anglo-Suisse	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Suisse	-1.5
Anglo-American	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-American	-1.5
Anglo-Dutch	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Dutch	-1.5
Anglo-Gulf	-1.5	1,000	1,000	Anglo-Gulf	-1.5</td

sport

Nevill to seek out potential

Hockey

BILL COLWILL

The search for potential Sean Kerley will get under way during the coming week with the junior territorial and divisional tournaments in Sheffield and Bristol.

The best place to be will be the Aurora Club, Sheffield, for the women's under-21 event starting on Thursday. With England committed to the Under-21 European Cup in Cardiff in August, the national coach, Mary Nevill, will be keen to see what is in the locker. "It is a very important tournament. Everyone in contention for places for Cardiff will be there and it will be the last chance we have to see all the contenders on a level base in a competitive tournament situation."

Nevill also made it clear that another priority in Sheffield will be to have an early look at replacements - in view of the junior World Cup in Seoul in 1997 - for those players who will be over age after Cardiff.

A tall order for Singleton

Basketball

DUNCAN HOOPER

Chester Jets have signed the 6ft 7in American Billy Singleton in an attempt to climb out of the Budweiser League's re-election places. The former Birmingham import makes his debut away to Thames Valley Tigers tonight.

Despite last month reaching the League Trophy quarter-finals for the first time and having the league's leading scorer in American Waymon Boone, Chester have lost their last 11 games and slipped back into the bottom three.

Chester's slide worsened when the 6ft 5in former England veteran Dave Gardner left to join Manchester Giants.

Chester coach Mike Burton said: "The biggest player on the court for us is only off 4m, and that doesn't help in the league."

Chester have released the American Karen Allen to make way for Singleton, who averaged 27 points a game with Birmingham two seasons ago.

Saints face ultimate test of faith

Steve Bale discovers the secret of Northampton's success this season as they prepare to meet Bath in the Pilkington Cup today

 It says everything about the swathe Northampton have this season easily cut through English rugby union's Second Division that this afternoon's Pilkington Cup tie at Bath will tell them more about themselves than their 10 league games put together.

A glance at the figures reveals that Northampton are in a league of their own as far as National League Two is concerned: 10 straight wins at an average of 53-12 for a points differential of 402, more than 300 better than the next best.

The commitment we made to each other was that winning wouldn't be enough in the Second Division'

leagues with a 10-from-10 record, have been playing rugby fit to grace the top of the First Division.

That Northampton are in the Second Division at all is not readily explicable, beyond the obvious truth that as they finished bottom last season they deserved to go down whatever the purported quality of the players at their disposal. Equally imponderable is whether they would be playing this sort of rugby now if they, rather than West Hartlepool and Harlequins, had somehow hung on last April.

"I would still rather it hadn't happened," Ian McGeechan, their coaching director, said. "But it's fair to say there would have been different pressures on us and different skills against us in the First Division and quite

perhaps it needed the catharsis of relegation. Not only are

Northampton on their way back to the First Division at the first attempt, they now have a big-money backer and have voted themselves into a limited company in readiness for the first blast of club professionalism. They are as well prepared as any club for the dam-burst that will come with the end of the Rugby Union's moratorium in May.

For this hectic progression from failure to success, Northampton owe their great

debt to Tim Rodber, the captain who took them down and is about to take them up again; a sort of Grand Old Duke of York in reverse. The most vital service he rendered was in persuading the members of last season's side to stay loyal, even though it can now be seen that the inevitably poorer standard of rugby has done nothing for his England prospects.

Not that others could complain. Martin Bayfield withstood Harlequins' blandish-

ments and kept his England place alongside Rodber. Paul Grayson and Matthew Dawson have formed a new England half-back partnership despite or should that be because of? - playing for Northampton.

Even so, Rodber is probably right to lay much of the blame for his unwontedly pallid performances against South Africa and Western Samoa at the door of Second Division rugby, however noble Northampton's intention may be to rise above this

self-inflicted milieu. "Going from the Second Division to international rugby has been tough for me," he said.

"But the loyalty factor was something I felt very strongly about. I had always played for Northampton and had no desire to play anywhere else. I canvassed everyone else, and everyone else was of the same opinion. So we're stuck together and been able to develop the style of rugby we wanted, iron out the wrinkles

as it were - which we would not have been able to do in the First Division."

The notion of personal sacrifice in the interests of a wider cause comes well from a serving officer. But Lt Rodber of the Green Howards, the oldest unamalgamated regiment in the army, knows all too well that the price could yet be his England back-row place - hence the magnitude of today's match for Rodber personally, every bit as much as his company of Saints.

Light training: Ian McGeechan warms to the task of preparing Northampton to face the First Division leaders, Bath, today

Photograph: Peter Jay

Hopley hoping to go semi-pro

DAVID LLEWELLYN

Damian Hopley has become a part-time professional. Hopley, a centre, who turns out for his club Wasps in his England position of right wing in the Pilkington Cup fourth-round tie at Sale today, has given up a job in the City of London.

"I'm speaking to a number of people at the moment," Hopley, 25, said. "I'm looking to go semi-professional, working as a promotions officer or consultant." The trend to go full or part-time pro has already been set by, among others, Tony Underwood, Martin Bayfield, Dean Richards and Kieran Bracken.

"The England contract helped. To have that cushion made the decision a lot easier."

St Helens looking to maintain tradition

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

The Christmas derby may not, after all, be a turkey doomed to have its neck wrung after this year.

Although the switch to summer rugby means that this festive season's will be the last league matches on Boxing Day and New Year's Day, St Helens are hoping to preserve the tradition. Saints have a lucrative annual meeting with Wigan on Boxing Day that they are reluctant to lose.

"We have come up with the idea that we should have a two-legged Winter Challenge, played on Boxing Day and New Year's Day, and decided on aggregate," said the Saints' chief executive, David Howes.

"We have put the idea to Wigan, who are interested in principle. The Rugby League would then have to give their permission, because it would fall outside the normal season."

"It is an attempt to capitalise on two of the block-busting sporting days of the year - but with a difference."

The financial temptations are obvious, but there are also clear drawbacks. Players would be asked to perform during their close-season, and coaches could regard it all as an un-

Formula One drivers warned off karts

Motor sport

The annual charity fund-raising Masters karting event attracted capacity crowds of 24,000 at Palais Omnisports in Paris last weekend despite the withdrawal of the Formula One champion Michael Schumacher at short notice.

Other leading Formula One drivers including David Coulthard, Damon Hill and Jarno Trulli were not allowed to compete by their teams because of the risk of injury.

A risk underlined by five drivers with Formula One experience who suffered injuries after the first night of the two-day event.

The Brazilian Roberto Moreno bruised his ribs, Finland's Mika Salo damaged a shoulder, the Italian Andrea Montermini cracked a rib, France's Olivier Grouillard bruised some ribs and the Italian Vincenzo Sospiri suffered a badly sprained wrist after Salo's kart landed upside down on him following a spectacular collision.

Philippe Streiff, the organiser, said the event has become too popular and competitive for its own good and may have to change in order to survive.

"I started this event for fun," said Streiff who is confined to a wheelchair since he broke his

neck in a Formula One test drive crash in Brazil six years ago. "It was a spectacle for the public and enjoyment for all the drivers, especially all the Formula One stars, who came to take part. But now it is too serious. The drivers go too fast and there are too many injuries."

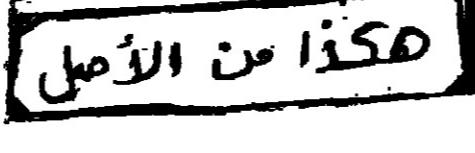
"The younger guys take it very seriously and fight hard," Streiff said. "The crowd love to see it, but it is dangerous for the Formula One drivers, of course. So, they need to have better protection - and we have to find a way of doing that to keep the event as successful as it is."

"We have to make the karts safer and we have to make the drivers more secure and better protected," he said.

Johnny Herbert, the winner of last season's British and Italian Grand Prix agreed with that analysis: "It is a great event and we all enjoy coming here each year," he said. "But you have to be careful. Injuries can be a problem, obviously, so we have to keep out of trouble."

"I know it has been worse this year. There have been a lot of very competitive younger guys from other junior formulae taking part, some of them karting champions and wearing protective waistcoats under their gear."

"Sometimes it is better to let them get on with it."



Win £10,000 of HI-FI PRIZES and more

with the  INDEPENDENT

We would like to give you some sound advice - enter our Aiwa prize draw and you could end up with the hi-fi system of your dreams. We have £10,000 of Aiwa technology to be won, including powerful midi hi-fi systems, VCRs and personal CD players, all of which are stylish and packed with features. There are five prizes plus 23 runners-up prizes.

They comprise:

Fifth prize:
ZD9300M Midi Hi-Fi System

Second Prize:
NSX-999 Mini Hi-Fi System

HS-RX848 Personal Stereo/Tape Model

HS-FX77 VCR

XP-R600 Personal CD Player

Second Prize:
NSX-999 Mini Hi-Fi System

HS-RX848 Personal Stereo/Tape Model

HS-FX77 VCR

Third Prize:
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System

HS-RX848 Personal Stereo/Tape Model

HS-FX77 VCR

Fourth Prize:
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System

HS-FX77 VCR

Fifth Prize:
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System

XP-R600 Personal CD Player

Runners-up:
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System

INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 23 DECEMBER 1995

Derby
to avo
footba**AYR**

HYPERION
12.25 Old Red 12.55 Cutthroat Kid
12.25 Lochmagnie 1.55 Wild Rose Of York
2.25 Seven Towers 2.55 Smart Approach

PERCAUTIONARY INSPECTION: Sunday 11.30hrs
 Good to Soft.

■ Right-hand, sharp course: run-in 30yds.
 Course is off to right on A758, ADMISSION: Club £16; Grandstand £8 (GAP half-price). CAR PARK: Free.

SIS**RACES CHARTERS**

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.

LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Elsie Man Horse (1.55) & Black-patch Hill (2.25) 214 miles by Trotter from Lennox, N York.

12.25 **AULD LANG SYNE MAIDEN HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,500 added 2m 4f**

1. O CEDAR GRASS (CD) Lungs 5.1.5. P Hodges

2. DAWN ROCK (R) McMillan 4.1.5. P Parker (S)

3. EXPLORE MONDIAL (CD) Dyer 4.1.5. A Utton (S)

4. COASTAL STORM (CD) Parker 4.1.5. B Stoney

5. MUSIC BOX (CD) Parker 4.1.5. J Hersey

6. 411/55 NAUGHTY TULIPS (CD) J O'Brien 4.1.5. M McNaughton

7. OLD BET (CD) Mrs M Reilly 5.1.5. J Hersey

8. 2121/2 SANTA CONCERTO (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

9. DOPP SOUTHERN FLUTTER (CD) Mrs M Reilly 5.1.5. J Hersey

10. THE READING (CD) Mrs A Stoney 5.1.5.

11. COASTAL STORM (CD) Parker 5.1.5. B Stoney

12. YOUNG SPARK (CD) Parker 4.1.5. J Hersey

13. 0282/5 CHARGE HORSE (CD) Mrs M Reilly 6.1.5. J Hersey

14. FOXLAD (CD) Mrs M Reilly 6.1.5. J Hersey

- declared -

BETTING: 5-6 Old Red, 2-3 Seven Towers, 5-1 Naughty Tulips, 2-1 others

12.25 **TENNENTS 80/-ALE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £3,000 added 2m**

1. 1211/2 WILD ROSE OF YORK (CD) P Morgan 4.1.2.0. -

2. 04 COLONIAL AMERICA (CD) Mrs A Stoney 5.1.2.0. -

3. 14 CHORIOT'S SHAW (CD) Lung 5.1.5. J Hersey

4. 0400/2 STEADFAST CORAL (CD) P Reilly 4.1.1.5. M McNaughton

5. 2121/2 MUSICAL STORM (CD) Parker 4.1.5. B Stoney

6. 22-3521 MARCH MADNESS (CD) Mrs M Reilly 5.1.5. J Hersey

7. 6-0425 THOROMORE (CD) J Goldie 7.10.4. -

8. 04-0402 MEADOWLARK (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

9. 04-0402 MEADOWLARK (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

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13. 04-0402 MEADOWLARK (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

14. 04-0402 MEADOWLARK (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

- declared -

BETTING: 5-6 Old Red, 2-3 Seven Towers, 5-1 Naughty Tulips, 2-1 others

12.25 **TENNENTS LAGER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £4,000 added 2m 4f**

1. 2202/5 RUMBLE AND RUMBLE (CD) P Morgan 5.1.10. -

2. 0524-34 COOL LANE (CD) Mrs M Reilly 6.1.2.0. -

3. 0225/2 CUTTHROAT (CD) Mrs M Reilly 6.1.1.5. -

4. 1221/2 UNFALLERS HURDLE (CD) Lung 7.10.5. -

5. 2202/5 BLACKHORN (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

6. 2202/5 BLACKHORN (CD) Lung 6.1.5. P Hodges

7. 0413/5 NICHOLAS PLANT (CD) Mrs M Reilly 6.1.5. -

8. 0201-25 JOHN BOY (CD) Mrs M Reilly 9.10.3. -

9. 0420/2 CHARGE HORSE (CD) Mrs M Reilly 6.1.5. -

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sport



Left to right: Eric Cantona goes over the top; England 'fans' riot at Lansdowne Road; Duncan Ferguson feted on his return from prison; George Graham protests his innocence

Photographs: AP/Empics/Peter Jay/Reuter

The year of men behaving badly

Glenn Moore looks back over 12 months which began with a kick, ended with a punch and had plenty of football in between countless trips to court

Christmas approaches and football could certainly do with a season of goodwill. A year that opened with Eric Cantona vaulting into a fan draw to its conclusion with Graeme Le Saux grazing his knuckles on David Batty's stubble. Forget the TV series, if you want to see men behaving badly, go to the footie.

In between Cantona's and Le Saux's antics there were riots off the field and stampings on it; the England manager in court and the Scotland centre-forward in jail; managers treating their contracts with contempt, and a chairman and a director conducting a row through the tabloids.

However, it was even worse on the Continent. Patrice Loko, of France, exposed himself to a policewoman and ended up in a mental hospital; Dynamo Kiev were expelled from the Champions' League for attempted bribery; and PAOK Salonika were taken over by hooligan supporters.

In the wider world, Parma's Colombian international Faustino Asprilla was convicted of firearms offence; an Angolan manager was assassinated, allegedly by rival fans; and Uefa and Fifa, the governing bodies of European and world football respectively, engaged in a power struggle.

These overseas shenanigans

almost make Duncan Ferguson appear the nice boy Joe Royle claims he is. Even so, the days when the British game could loftily take the moral high ground are long gone. The most damaging case of all, the bribery allegations made against Bruce Grobbelaar, John Fashanu and Hans Segers, rumbles on with no sign of a conclusion.

But is the game morally bankrupt? Or is it merely suffering from more intensive media scrutiny? And if it is, does it merely reflect society?

Yes, paradoxically, it probably the answer to all three questions, though it would be an outrageous (and potentially expensive) slur on the vast majority to suggest football people are morally bankrupt.

"You have to put things in perspective," Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the PFA, the players' union, said. "There have been problems this year but nothing compared with the tragedies of the Eighties."

And what about the clubs?

"It is unrealistic to expect them all to be choirboys. The vast majority are a credit to their professionalism. Players are expected to be role models and it is a burden for

January

Eric Cantona assaults Matthew Stretton, City v Watford, FA Cup, 1st round, 3rd Feb; **Mohsen v Hayes**, Yeovil v St Albans, Yeovil v Cheltenham, First Division, 1st round, 10th Feb; **Leeds v Birmingham**, Birmingham v Bristol Rovers, 2nd round, 17th Feb; **Bolton v Balaikin**, Bolton v Aldershot Town, Matchday 1, 24th Feb; **Stevens v McNaughton**, manager of Millwall v Swindon, 25th Feb; **Police** (not the football ones) at the Odeon Coliseum, 26th Feb; **Peter Shilton** is sacked by Plymouth over the Dennis Bergkamp affair, 27th Feb; **John Barnes** and **David Rocastle** are suspended from the England team, 28th Feb; **Police investigation** (not the football ones) into the match-fixing scandal, 29th Feb; **Matchday 2** (not the football ones), 1st March; **Matchday 3** (not the football ones), 2nd March; **Matchday 4** (not the football ones), 3rd March; **Matchday 5** (not the football ones), 4th March; **Matchday 6** (not the football ones), 5th March; **Matchday 7** (not the football ones), 6th March; 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Over the next year or so, Des Lynam is set to become a sort of cathode tube King Lear, presiding over a lost empire

It was a black day for Rupert Murdoch. His organisation had spent considerable resources buying up the best available talent, and here was someone else moving in and buying it off him. What did they think they were doing? Had they no integrity? Had they no sense of the damage they were inflicting to the seed-bed of the game's future, otherwise known as Mr Murdoch's bank balance?

There was nothing for it but to take the matter to a higher authority. Thus the headline on the back page of the Sun on the morning of 23 December 1996 read: "Murdoch fury as Rockin' Ricky defects from Sky to ITV". Alongside it was a photograph of the multi-national tycoon striding into a terraced pub in Lancaster Gate alongside a sheepish looking man with a healthy waistline.

"After all we have been through, I am sorry to have to take Ricky to the British Board of Televised Darts Control," Murdoch was quoted as saying. "But players have got to be made to appreciate that their first loyalty must always be to the television company which signed them up."

It may sound absurd, but that kind of contractual relationship between sportsmen and their paymasters is the logical outcome of Murdoch's insistence this week that players sign a loyalty clause with him. Notwithstanding the interesting concept of a man whose own commitment to 250 staff and 600,000 readers was such that he closed down *Today* newspaper overnight insisting on others' loyalty to him, you can only marvel at the speed with which the medium has taken over our sport.

We have now reached the stage where it is television executives who decide how the game should be played, by whom, when and what size the dart-board should be. Indeed the quaintest aspect of those glorious *Match of the Seventies* shown during the summer was not the cut of Rodney Marsh's shorts, nor the cut and thrust of Ron Harris's tackling, nor even the half-cut George Best, it was the fact that on neither occasion *Dartley* won the title back then did any footage exist of their critical, trophy-winning game. It seems inconceivable these days that it could happen: a match of such importance played without the presence of the television cameras. In 1995 Wimbledon couldn't play Coventry on a meaningless Monday night in September without Sky devoting four hours to the event.

cheque has been one of the less edifying sights of the last twelve months. Over the next year or so, Des Lynam is set to become a sort of cathode tube King Lear, presiding over a lost empire, howling against the injustices wrought upon his crumbling authority. Well, as it's Des, perhaps not howling, more wise-cracking.

Not that it is always in a sport's interests to chase the money. Those now selling themselves to the narrow-casting of satellite, or worse, cable, rather than the universality of terrestrial television, should bear in mind the experience of Lennox Lewis. There is a plausible theory that he did not capture the British public's imagination because he fought on Sky, with its limited audience, rather than BBC or ITV. Now Lewis might say he earned his crust and popularity doesn't pay the bills. Except it does, particularly when it comes to exploiting your face commercially after retirement.

The influence television exerts over sport, however, is not limited to control over its practices and practitioners. Our attitude to the big items of sports news in 1995 was almost entirely moulded by whether they were caught on camera or not. The Cantona leap was so compelling mainly because it was so clearly filmed; no cameras were there the day Dixie Dean clipped a lippy fan, thus questions were not asked in Parliament about it. And the riot at Lansdowne Road hung like a cloud in the memory mainly because of the footage. Here were two of the most depressing sights of the sporting year: fascist thuggery on ugly destruction and Matt Le Tissier trudging off dejectedly when the game was abandoned, never to play again in an England shirt.

It was the filmed evidence that made those incidents so much more dramatic. Would Denis Wise have been acquitted if the taxi driver had closed circuit television coverage of all his fares? Would anyone really have cared that an obscure American tennis player called Jeff Tarango walked off court during Wimbledon had the BBC's lenses not been there to record the every last umpteenth explosive that proceeded?

Which is something Rupert Murdoch understands very well: he who pays the piper plays the tune. And, more importantly, he who has the cameras there gets the news story.

Jim White



ON SATURDAY

There is no doubt that the biggest winner in the sporting world this year has been television. Or rather certain television companies. The manner in which the BBC has been effectively asset-stripped as its major sports have disappeared off in pursuit of a large

Irish king-makers plan succession

Football

DAVID HUGHES
reports from Dublin

In nudging Jack Charlton on his way, the king-makers of the Football Association of Ireland have correctly given themselves time to appoint a successor prior to the World Cup group fixtures meeting in Liechtenstein on 23 January.

However, Monday's PR own goal of the four officers – president Louis Kilcoyne, honorary treasurer Joe Delaney, and the honorary vice-president Michael Hyland and Pat Quigley – may see their fellow executives in the 20-man executive council balk at any recommendations for the new manager they make at the next meeting of 12 January. Presented with a *faid accomplice*,

they may opt for a compromise candidate, which is exactly how Charlton was elected on Friday night, 7 February, 1986 after receiving three votes out of 18 on the first ballot.

Comparisons with the succession to Maggie Thatcher's throne seem odious, but the equally conservative Charlton has had his tyrannical moments (ask Liam Tuohy, David O'Leary, Liam Brady and Frank Stapleton). If Charlton is Irish football's Thatcher, than Mick McCarthy would seem the obvious John Major in the making.

He has played the political game expertly, remaining in constant contact with FAI executives and the players through regular sorties across the Irish sea. Furthermore, in bringing on Mark Kennedy, Dave Savage and Kenny Cunningham he has arguably nurtured more young

Irish talent at Millwall than Maurice Setters ever did at Irish Under-21 level. McCarthy even comes blessed with Charlton's imprimatur, although he is no clone of the previous leader's long-ball game.

Unbeknown to many within the FAI and the Irish media, the same could be said of Joe Kearns. Despite moulding a more football-oriented and tactically varied style at Wimbledon

off equally thin resources, the flawed perception of the Dublin-born son of a Guinness employee is of a Cockney spiv who promotes an even cruder version of Charlton's philosophy.

Also rumoured to be in contention have been Kenny Dalglish, Alex Ferguson and Ron Atkinson as well as a batch of former players such as Kevin Moran, Mark Lawrenson, Frank Stapleton and Liam Brady.

A Continental appointment is not as fanciful as it might sound, for there are at least three FAI executives, who would like to bypass the English game in appointing a successor who would also oversee a £5m-plus per annum football school of excellence.

The only tangible legacy of the last 10 years is money in the bank – as much as £7m – generated in the Charlton years. Now is the time to invest some of it in the future.

■ **Overmars' Ajax team-mate, Patrick Kluivert, will be prosecuted for causing death by dangerous driving following a fatal accident in September. The 19-year-old striker faces one year in jail, a fine and a five-year driving ban if found guilty. He has already admitted speeding.**

Dutch lose Overmars

Marc Overmars, the Dutch right-winger, has been ruled out of the European Championship finals with a knee injury. The unlucky 23-year-old will also have to watch as his club, Ajax, continue their defence of the European Cup.

Overmars – who has been attracting interest from Manchester United – tore ligaments in his left knee after slipping on the icy pitch during Ajax's 1-0 home win over De Graafschap Doetinchem on Wednesday in the Dutch league.

Overmars' absence could force the Netherlands, who are grouped with hosts England,

to rethink their strategy. The only other right-winger who could be considered is Feyenoord's Gus Taunay. However, he is injured and unlikely to play before April. Byrrn Roy, the Nottingham Forest striker, could be recalled, but he is also injured.

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Bradford consider legal action

Bradford City and Norwich City remained on a collision course last night after Gary Megson quit the West Yorkshire club to become the new manager at Carrow Road.

Megson, only recently installed as assistant to Bradford's new manager, Chris Kamara, walked out of Valley Parade to once again take up the reins at Norwich in succession to Martin O'Neill. That brought an angry response from the Bradford chairman, Geoffrey Richmond, who claimed that Bradford had made an illegal approach for Megson.

Richmond revealed that his club are considering taking out an injunction to block the appointment. "We are upset

because what we consider to be an illegal approach was made to a contractor employee," Richmond said. "This was a flagrant breach of Football League regulations and a breach of legal employment laws.

Robert Chase, the Norwich chairman, insisted that his club had not behaved badly. "We will defend ourselves against any accusation that Bradford might take," he said. "Gary was on seven days' notice and had an assurance from his chairman that they would not stand in his way if another club came for him."

Megson was in temporary charge of Norwich last season after John Deehan resigned, but was unable to prevent their relegation from the Premiership to the Second Division. He has now returned to the club and is set to take over again this season and is partnered in defence by Keween.

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Bradford consider legal action

American football

The former Reading midfielder Simon Cowdell complicated his £2m move to Reading for the start of the American football season.

The Miami Dolphins linebacker, Bryan Cox, was paid nearly £12,000 and the Buffalo Bills running back Carwell Gardner £10,000 after being traded to the Bills' 23-20 victory. Gardner then chased Cox into the Dolphins' locker-room before being apprehended by security officers, but later was looking for Cox on the Dolphins' bus.

They came in their thousands to the one-day internationals, but quite clearly the public had to be enticed back to Test cricket. This, despite the almost complete loss of six days play during the first three Tests.

Everton's manager told them that they must beat the Nigerian strikers, Daniel Amokachi, for the African Nations Cup in South Africa next month. Amokachi will leave after the Boxing Day fixture against Middlesbrough and return to Nigeria in January to play in the national team's final match of the year on 4 February. Other players affected include Efe Obi (Wimbledon and Nigeria), Nii Lamptey (Coventry and Ghana), Tony Yeboah (Leeds and Ghana) and Robbie Keane (Bolton and Ireland).

Jimmy Cheng has resigned as the manager of the Scottish Third Division club, Alloa Town. Their player-coach, Joe McBride, the former Everton forward, has been appointed caretaker manager. McBride, who was released to his former club, Bradford, will make his return to the forward line on Saturday, 26 January, when Alloa Town host Dundee United. He has agreed a deal with the club until the end of the season.

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Things to do
Dances to see
Shows to see
this Christmas

Pix
Everyday and Sunday
through to Boxing Day

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET'S PRODUCTION OF TALES OF BEATRIX POTTER BY LAURIE LEWIS

INSIDE STORIES

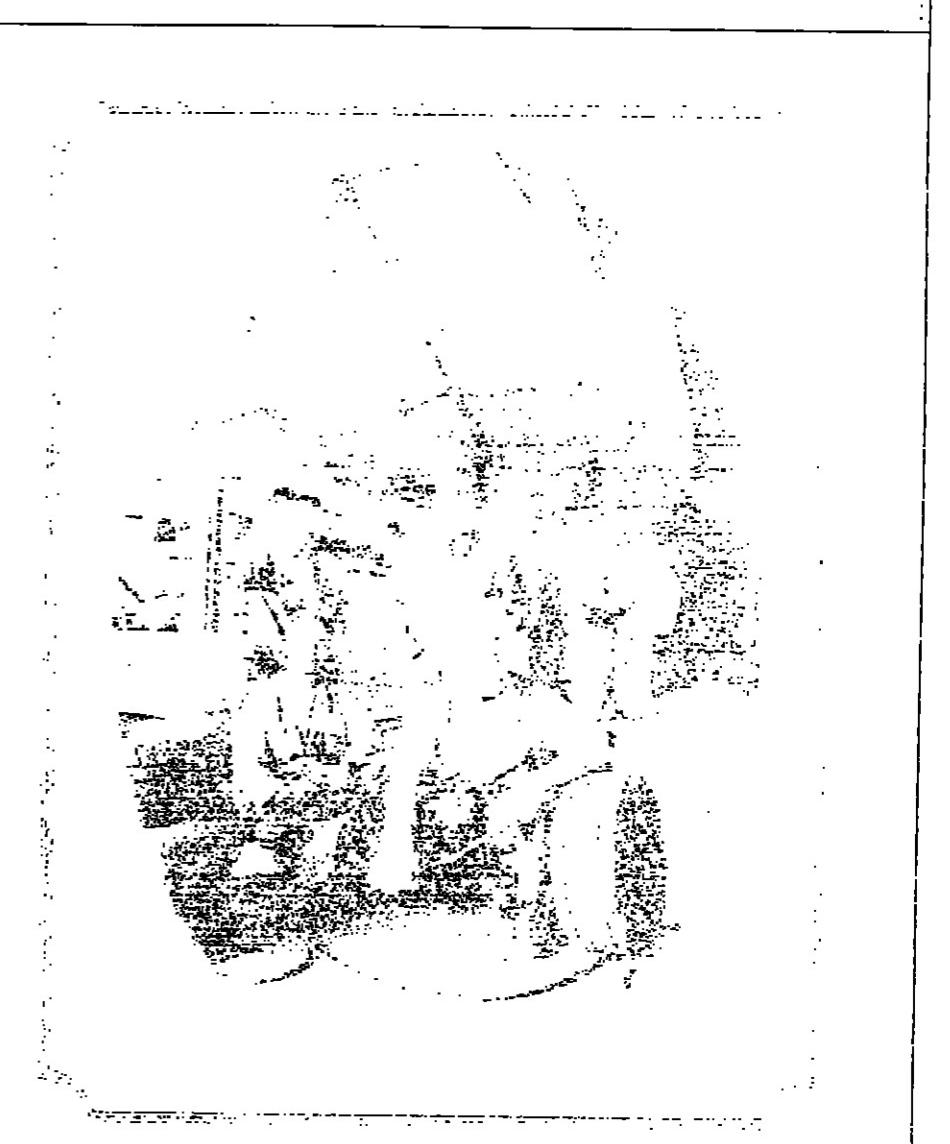
3 Running BBC1 is the closest anyone in the media gets to picking the national football team. In both jobs, error incites orgiastic abuse. It's a measure of Alan Yentob's success that not a single tabloid headline has compared him to a vegetable

6 The reason I was in a service station at 11 pm on Christmas Eve deciding whether my mother would prefer the milk tray or the wilting pot plant was, according to Dr Joseph R Ferrari, because I was consumed by self loathing. So that's it.

9 Dickens is surely the world's leading Foodie novelist: you can scarcely flick through 10 consecutive pages without bumping into a steaming veal pie, succulent oysters, slabs of beefsteak, wedding cake or curious fellow that he was - threatened cannibalism

12 I am no stranger to loud noise: once dated a woman with two kids. But at midnight on Christmas Eve in El Salvador, with the windows shut, the air conditioner on, the TV turned up and the bathroom door closed, I couldn't hear myself sing 'Wild Colonial Boy' in the shower.

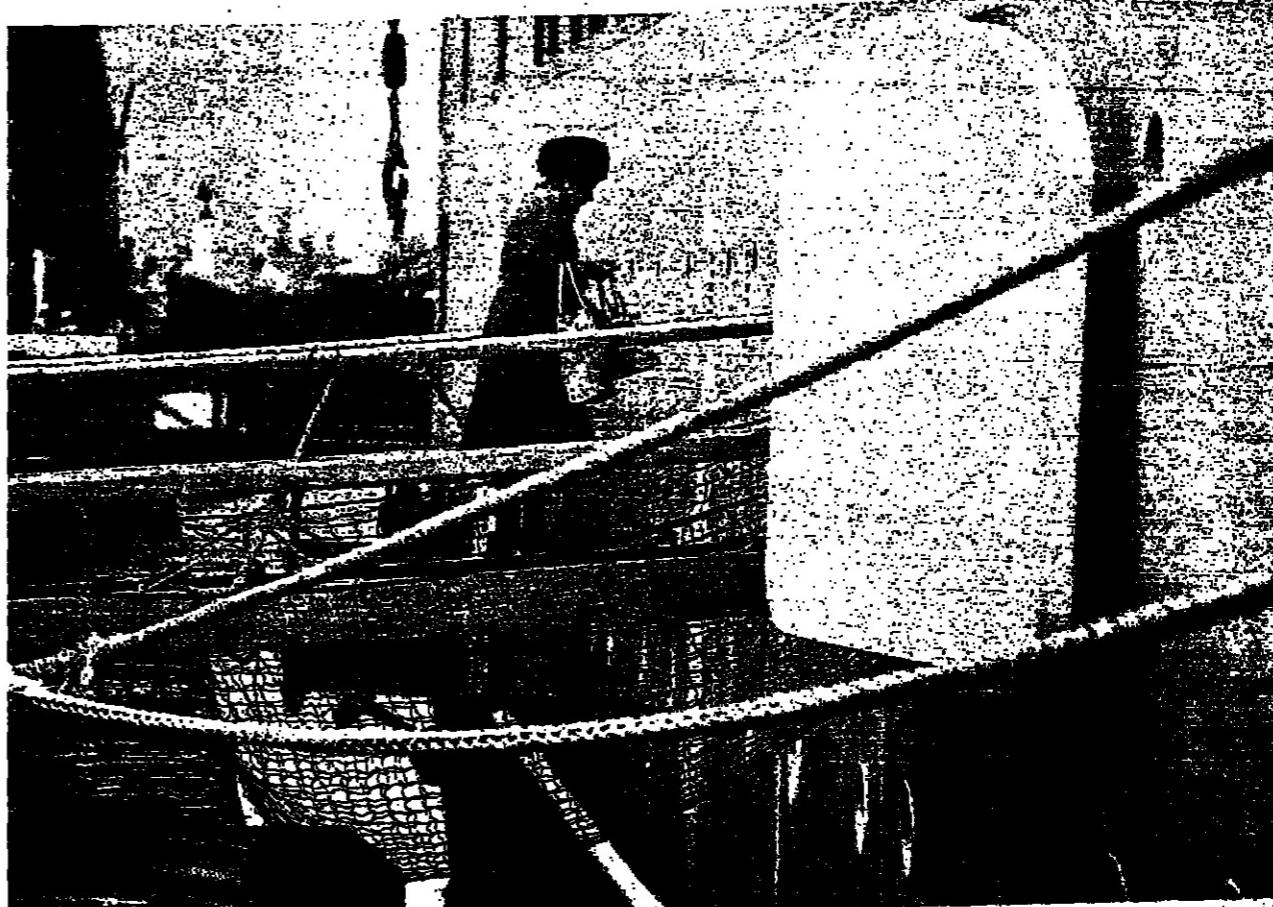
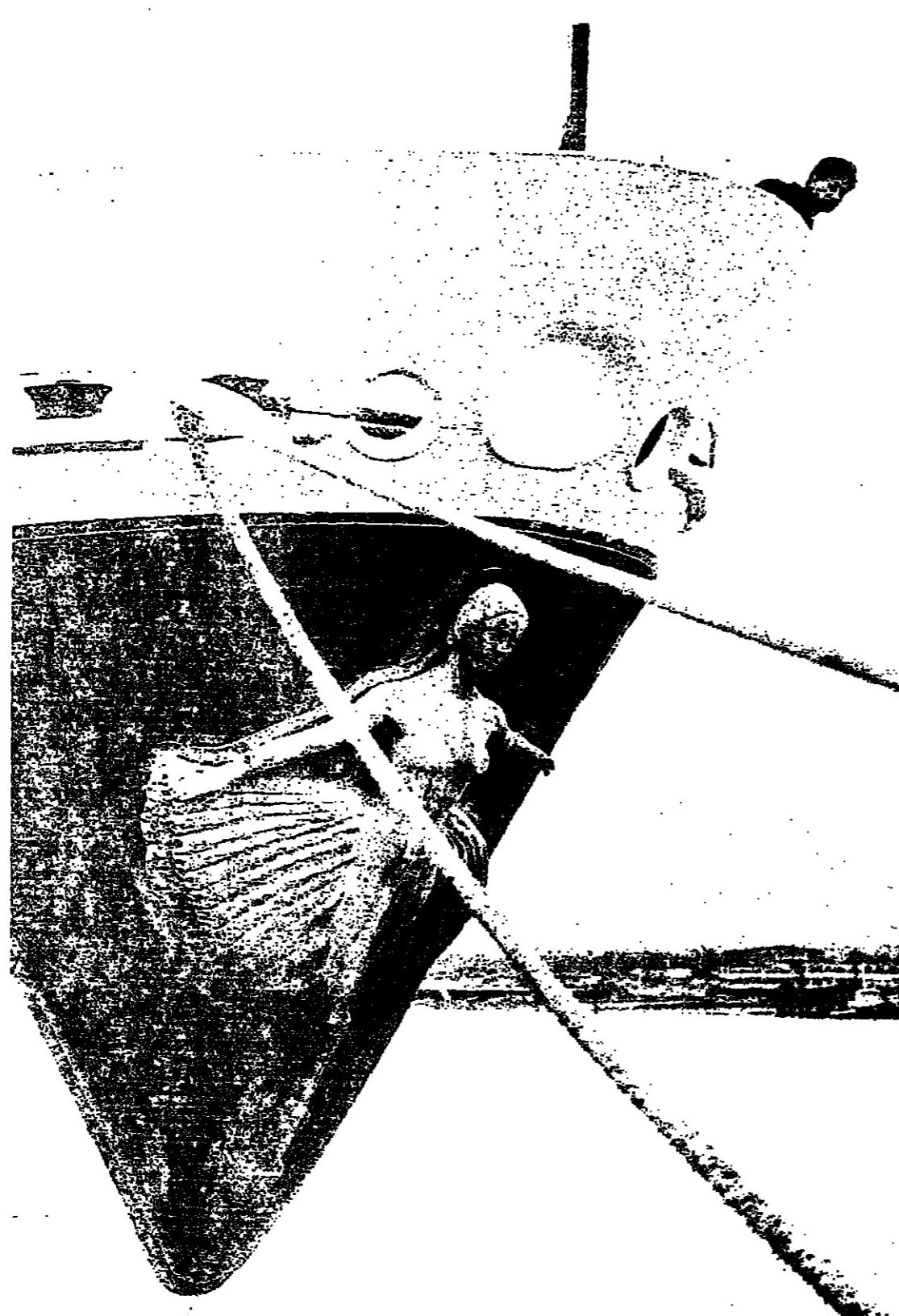
PICTURE STORY	2	BOOKS	8-9	TRAVEL	12-14	TELEVISION AND RADIO	17
INTERVIEW	3	COUNTRY	10	MONEY	16-17		
SHOPPING	4-6	PROPERTY		GOING OUT	18-19	TODAY	24
ARTS	7	GARDENING	11	PASTIMES	21-23	CHRISTMAS DAY	22
						CHRISTMAS EVE	23
						BOXING DAY	24



Many things have gone for ever in these days - but thankfully not in Burton. MARTIN DEXTER REVISITS THE GOLDEN PINT IT WAS IN GOOD OLD JOHN MARSTON'S PUB BECAUSE IT'S THE ONLY BEER STILL BREWED IN MORDEN LONDON. THANK HEAVENS SOME THINGS ARE WHAT THEY USED TO BE



picture story



Pictures by Glynn Griffiths
Story by Simon Calder



CRUISING AWAY FROM IT ALL

At five past five on Wednesday, shoppers enduring a final burst of hyperactivity within the artless confines of Toys 'R' Us were too absorbed with last-minute shopping to notice the sleek funnel sliding south along Southampton Water for the last time. "It's a sad event," says Captain Bernt Fronth, looking out from the bridge at the line of lanky cranes marching off into the mist. "We've had a good relationship with Southampton." But the vessel's Norwegian owner, Fred Olsen, has decided that the financial and operational advantages of Dover outweigh its traditional loyalty to the Hampshire port. So on Wednesday, the *Black Prince* steamed out of berth 105 and left behind a quarter-century of cruising from Southampton.

For the next two weeks, Captain Fronth will be in legal charge of 450 passengers (mostly British) and 200 crew (Norwegian officers, Thai and Filipino dining staff). The equivalent of a Hampshire village will spend Christmas cruising around the Canary Islands, ending up at Madeira for the New Year's Eve fireworks display.

"Nine times out of 10, if all the relatives come round, it just ends in a big punch-up," says David Middleton, a furniture manufacturer, who is escaping Christmas on his sixth cruise. When he and his family go on board, the staff greet them like long-lost friends. "Southampton's such a disaster zone, with what the council's done or not done, that getting away for Christmas is the finest thing you could do. You don't have to worry about going to church - the church comes to you."

Cliff Comyns, the ship's chaplain, says his 20 years spent ministering to the spiritual needs of the Paras was ideal preparation for cruising. "Life on board is just like the Army. From breakfast until midday, I wander around talking to people, particularly those travelling on their own. In the afternoon, I just sit with intent."

Britain's two biggest tour operators have begun navigating the cruising market: Thomson and Airtours both offer a starting price of £399 for a week in the Med. On

the *Black Prince*, though, the average passenger has paid £1,300 for the Christmas cruise. This buys a modest cabin, with design values dating from the mid-Sixties when the vessel was built: functional furniture draped in turquoise fabric.

"Oh - she's on here. I thought she'd be dead by now." No malice lay behind this casual remark in the Neptune lounge; it merely reflected the fact that the average passenger is aged 68. Some are helped aboard with wheelchairs uncharitably marked "Southampton Cargo Handling". Dr Jim Naysmith is taking time out from heading the medical team at Cardiff rugby club to look after rather more frail charges. "Some people seem to get attention - they have access to 24-hour care."

For some repeat customers, the care from dining staff is what counts. Pat and Britt Carne got into maritime mood by taking the ferry across from their home on the Isle of Wight. "They've gone overboard to help us," says Mrs Carne, pausing a smile at her unfortunate nautical metaphor. "We've been sailing on the *Black Prince* since the Sixties, and we have the same table in the same restaurant every time. They even know whether you prefer one cup of tea or two after your meal." Mr Carne recalls the first voyage of the Russian cruise ship *Alexander Pushkin*. "It was bloody awful - they kept the light ale in the deep freeze; we ended up with beer lollipops."

Two first-timers are working a passage to the sun. Mislava and Zrinka Mikelic (pictured at the piano, above centre) are virtuoso sisters from Croatia, invited on board to entertain passengers in the Aquitaine Lounge with classical music. Aged 19 and 21 respectively, the violinist and pianist also handily reduce the average on-board age by a month or two.

David Middleton sums up the pleasure of a floating population delighted to be leaving home - and Southampton. "If you have Christmas at home, the wife's stuck making the dinner while the old man's down the pub. Here, the wife and the old man both go down the pub."

THIS WEEKEND WHY NOT...

READ A Classic Christmas Crime



Famous as the season of inns, donkeys and Herod, Yuletide is equally notorious for thoughts of matricide, patricide and infanticide. To quell such notions, take a break from Delia's Christmas Countdown, oceans of wrapping paper and tears of hyperactive offspring, and dip into *A Classic Christmas Crime*, edited by Tim Heald. There are 13 stories in the collection, in settings as far flung as Florida and Yorkshire, each with a seasonal theme (pudding, crackers, charades), the work of a baker's dozen of premier league writers, among them Simon Brett, Peter Lovesey, HRF Keating, Liza Cody and - a rare sighting in story collections - PD James (above), with a teasingly "auto-biographical" mystery, "The Mistletoe Murder". Just the thing to absorb, like a box of bittemints, beside a roaring fire, while you can still stand anything with the word Christmas in the title... Published by Pavilion at £14.99

TASTE Whisky Galore!



Remember that delightful Ealing comedy based on Compton Mackenzie's celebrated novel? It is accompanying a spiffing exhibition aboard a magical ship-shaped set with numerous background facts and artefacts to the spirited story. Pride of place goes to a bottle recovered from the SS *Politician*, sunk off the island, only recently liberated from the claws of HM Customs & Excise. You can't swig from that one, but there are free tasting sessions in which to educate your palate to the tune of eight individual Highland malts, and a Christmas Gallery Trail, with a gleaming bottle of the stuff as the star prize.

At the Imperial War Museum, London SE1. Tastings (4pm 27, 28 Dec) must be booked, today only, on 0171-416 5311. The film is at 3pm 27, 28 Dec. Exhibition runs to 28 Jan. Admission £4.10 / £3.10 concs.

SEE La Belle et la Bête



Mme Leprince de Beaumont isn't exactly a household name, but in 1757 she wrote a fairytale which has been undergoing a renaissance ever since Disney cast Angela Lansbury to do a voice-over for a singing teapot and cleaned up at the box-office. Marvellous though the cartoon Cocteau's ravishing film, *The Simple Storytelling* is enriched by startlingly beautiful surreal images, while the stunning art direction and photography has inspired everyone up to and including Tim Burton. This unqualified masterpiece now looks better than it has done for 30 years thanks to a luscious new print, full of liquid blacks and whites. Children will fall in love with cinema; adults, too, will gasp with sheer pleasure.

Edinburgh Filmhouse 0131-228 2688 / London NFT 0171-928 3232. Selected release from next week.

BUY A Proper Gate



There must be a life beyond fences, thought Robin Maitland, who set up his company Proper Gates to escape from the drudgery of his main occupation as a fencing contractor. Mud, rain, cold, nettles and brambles finally convinced him that at least part of the winter ought to be spent under cover. Now he designs and makes a wide variety of gates for houses, racing stables, churches and schools. He has devised a patent method of incorporating such motifs as cockerels and swans made of marble as centrepieces in solidly constructed gates of treated softwood. Other more traditional designs have been copied from the gates of rectories, manors and estates, from the 17th-century farm in Shropshire.

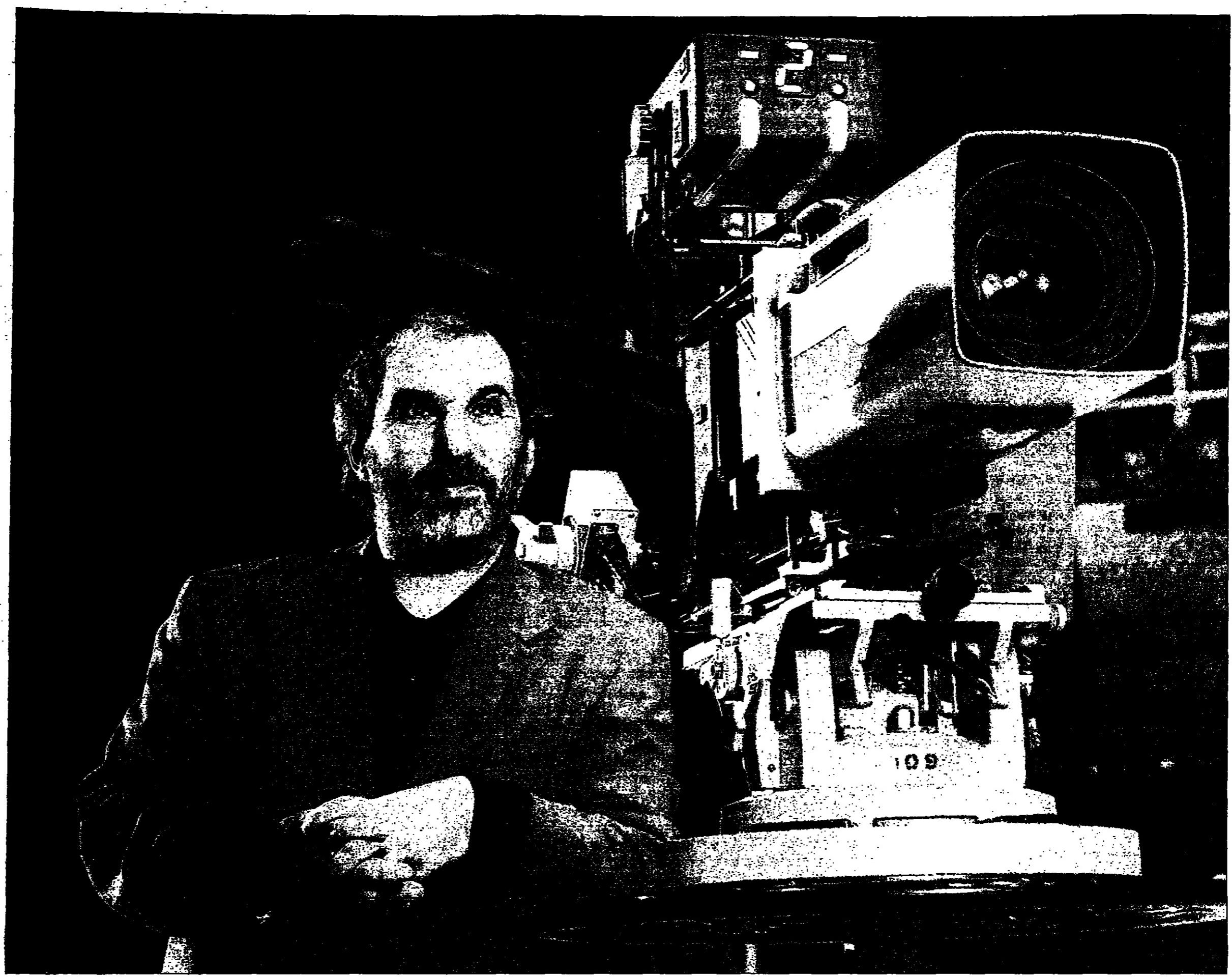
Proper Gates is at Overton Farm, Overton, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 4UD. 01584 87794.

KNIT Gromit's Scarf



Learn to knit with Gromit! Being of a generous disposition, our friend has decided to share his superior knowledge of needlecraft with the nation in the form of his very own Knit Kit. Gromit will be convinced by shots of our friendly cartoon and, plucking away at Gromit's latest film, *Flotsam*, draw a sheep-hunting mallet and start to learn the lingo. The kit has everything a craftsman needs, from the rainbow-coloured yarns and needles to an attractive and durable PVC wallet, which also contains *Knitting for Dummies*, an essential guide, different patterns of his favo

£12.99 available in selected branches of Debenhams, House of Fraser and John Lewis. Visit www.gromit.com for more information. *Flotsam* is on DVD 26 Dec. £19.99. See www.bbc.co.uk/bbc2



The host of Christmas present

Alan Yentob is about to become Santa Claus: As controller of BBC1, it is his job to prepare a carefully wrapped package of programmes for the most captive audience of the year. But does he have the populist touch to deliver the goods? By Jasper Rees. Photograph by Herbie Knott

On the night that 22.8 million people were at home watching *Dianarama*, Alan Yentob went to the opera. The invitation to Hindemith came from Jeremy Isaacs, the director of the Royal Opera House, "who's a friend of mine". The protocol among the bosses of great British cultural institutions is much the same as at head of state level. For this sort of invitation, you just don't plead a prior engagement. But it was perhaps the "difficulty" of the opera that prompted Yentob to issue a proviso with his acceptance. Of course, he had seen it all before, but he told Isaacs that he "really must" watch the BBC's biggest moment of the year live.

Yentob is a great one for seeing how his schedules look on screen as well as on paper, so, to humour him, Isaacs laid on his office. Whereupon Mrs Isaacs, Gillian Widdicombe, let it be known that she too would rather not miss the interview. So did Yentob's partner Philippa Walker. Isaacs, facing a rout, chose to go with the flow. The quartet duly vacated their seats some time before 9.25pm, watched *Dianarama*, toasted the triumph with champagne and returned to their seats for the climax of the opera.

This is the near-perfect Alan Yentob story. For a start, it shows him hand at work, even when out at play. It incorporates some judicious name-dropping, a bit of string-pulling and a splash of superior liquid. It also shows him being ever so slightly cheeky. Above all, it finds enjoyment culture as high as it gets while simultaneously staying in touch with his public. If only Yentob had phoned home to check up on his two young children, the snapshot of a well-connected, domestically and professionally diligent cultural contortionist would have been complete.

He tells this story as he navigates the route between his office, where this interview has been sandwiched (along with sandwiches) into his schedule, to Studio Four. Studio Four, where the photographer awaits, is the place they used to make *This Is Life*. Then Yentob axed it before it lost any more viewers. It was through amputations like this that Yentob discovered the bottom line: running BBC1 is the closest anyone in the media can get to picking the national football team. In either job, error incites orgiastic abuse.

The similarity is most apparent at the launch of the BBC's winter season, a lavish affair in the ballroom of the Hilton in Park Lane. (A bit of a homecoming for the boy Yentob, as it happens; his family moved to a mansion block here when he was 12). This is Yentob's quarterly date with the press, and after the odd mixture of actors and hacks have watched the preview tape, the sharp-suited gaffer stands at the centre of a circle of quote-hungry microphones and notebooks and fields questions: "Are you happy about the improved performance of the drama department, Alan?" "What about the big Christmas clash between *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*?" "Are you pleased you've closed the gap on ITV by a couple of points?"

It's a measure of Yentob's success that in three years not one tabloid headline has compared him with a root vegetable. His most dogged assailant is the former television critic of the *Observer*, who reversed his name to Botney and still coughs up goblets of Swiftian bile into the spittoon that is his column. But Yentob has very few public enemies. This is lucky, because he is extremely sensitive to criticism. If Bobby Robson went grey and Graham Taylor tramped offstage in a fog of his and others' expletives, you dread to think what national disfavour would do to Yentob.

At this time of year, though it may not know it, the nation looks to him. To all intents and purposes, the controller of BBC1 is Father Christmas, dropping a package of programmes down the chimney that families unwrap together. "It's one of the few occasions of the year," he says, "when you could be getting people just sitting down watching your schedule quite consistently throughout the evening."

Though this appears to be a slice of worthy controllerspeak, it is a revealing remark. While viewers aren't trained to absorb and react to the shape of a schedule, they may well have noticed the adjacency of last Saturday's Lottery result and Screen One's *It Might Be You*, a playful portrait of the disharmony sown by lottery wins. Yentob doesn't make programmes any more, so pulling such juxtapositions out of the hat is the closest he gets to creativity. If he could have relocated it to a Saturday, there's no doubt that the mischievous Yentob would have scheduled

Panorama's Camelot investigation after the draw too. (Whatever his channel says about it, incidentally, he still does the lottery: so far he has twice won £10.)

It Might Be You was written by Nigel Williams, the novelist editor of *Omnibus* and Yentob's best BBC friend. They both joined the corporation in the late 1960s. "He was like the bloke in the years above, really," says Williams. "He knew the ropes. He was obsessive about his work, even then: 24 hours a day. Work to him was pleasure." He failed to make what Williams calls "that very English separation" between work and play. "He was very unlike the correct civil servant graduate type which at that time the BBC used to employ a hell of a lot of."

Yentob's application showed naughteering pluck: "I wrote something extremely facetious which would have irritated me if I had read it. I said, 'I've played one of the merry wives ...' Actually I can't tell you this. 'Go on, give us a scoop. 'One of my colleagues in the production said to me, 'You've got lovely legs, you ought to be in show business.' So I thought: the BBC, that's my entrée."

It would be easy to argue that as a redbrick, Sephardic Jew of Iraqi stock, Yentob had to work twice as hard to rise in a still strait-faced institution. Yentob himself says he "probably felt more of an outsider in the English public school system than I did in the BBC. I think the BBC is big enough and generous enough to allow all kinds of individuals to thrive within it. I genuinely believe that about it, otherwise I don't think it would be the kind of liberating and creative place that I think, at its best, it always has been."

(That, by the way, is a truncated though otherwise typical Yentob paragraph: it starts out with the particular and gradually fans out to include a slightly flabby but warm-hearted tribute to the generosity and idealism of the institution to which Yentob has devoted his entire working life. The modern BBC is somewhere between a church and a business, and these days Yentob's speech patterns are an inevitable reflection of that.)

If Yentob was ever an outsider, nearly 30 years at the Corporation have sucked him so far into the inner sanctum that his ashes will no doubt be scattered there. No career trajec-

tory can ever have been both so orderly. He began his general traineeship in Bush House where, physically clumsy, he braved self-laceration to cut his own tapes. He moved on to Kensington House and started making the witty, ironic documentaries that would land him the stewardship of *Arena*. From running an arts strand, he graduated to an arts department (Music and Arts), to an arts channel (BBC2). Then, three years ago, came the big One.

The nub of the complaint about Yentob's appointment was this: it's one thing to make clever-clever programmes about the cultural significance of the Cortina, quite another to make popular programmes for people who drive Cortinas. "I'm one of the few people to have actually raced a Cortina," says Noel Edmonds, the channel's main dealer in Cortina television, who might have had most cause to fear his appointment. "I think it was very brave of him to take the job. But more than any other controller that I've had contact with, he has managed to make the people in entertainment feel part of the overall BBC. He has just got an extremely human touch. It was an inspired decision."

"I never felt that me and this job were the perfect fit," he says. "I never said, 'It's so obvious. I should be running BBC1.' I'm the answer to popular television." In fact, I said this could be a terrible folly. On the other hand, I think that the BBC is a complicated beast, and I have a conviction of what I think it's about. The ideal public service TV as the BBC has seen it historically is a tremendously big and bold and interesting idea. If I felt that people were prepared to trust me to have a go then I thought it was a challenge I couldn't resist."

The reviews for the first year were pretty poor: the second brought improvement. 1995 has been his best yet. OK, so the channel was wounded by loss of the Cup Final, wined when it opted to scupper *Good Morning with Arne and Nick*. But *Dianarama* and *Pride and Prejudice* have fed an appetite for soap in lofty places. *The Private Life of Plants* found Sir David Attenborough scaling new heights and *They Think It's All Over* brightly mutated the game-show format.

The biggest makeover has been in drama. There are still no whoppers to rival ITV's, but

popular series are now holding their own: *Hannish Macbeth*, *Dangerfield*, *Pie in the Sky* and *Roughnecks*. Before Yentob started commissioning drama for BBC2, his only brush with any serious form of thespianism had been when he played the lead in a NUS production of a Max Frisch play that passed through the Garrick Theatre one week when Yentob was 17. True to the type that he would become, he played a chain-smoking intellectual. He was given the dressing room of Margaret Leighton, who left him some flowers and afforded him his first opportunity to drop a famous name.

There are two strands to complaints about drama under Yentob: one is that the commissioning process is over-centralised and that having too many meetings to attend and too many decisions to make, Yentob is indecisive. In the launch video for the Christmas season, Angus Deayton invaded the boss's office to find both in and out trays empty, but the pending tray scraping the ceiling. "That got a huge laugh," says Edmonds. "He tries very hard to please a lot of people and inevitably that can mean that some decision-taking can take a while. I've got a lot of stuff in that pending file. Among the casualties of the dithering has been *Drop the Dead Donkey*, now Channel 4's only good sitcom.

The second complaint was voiced last Christmas by Andrew Davies, who mystifyingly berated Yentob for ordering drama "like rolls of carpet" when he himself was by far the busiest supplier. "If there's more drama in the drama department than there is on the screen," Yentob says now, "then that's because that's the kind of place it is; it's a creative institution." For the winter season, he can boast that there's a lot of new carpeting now in, and some of it looks durable and of quality thread. 1996 looks like another year of solid growth.

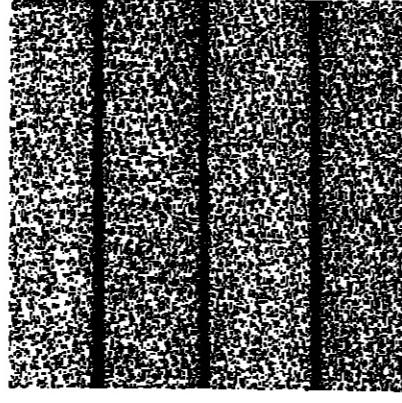
When Yentob applied to the BBC, he used what he calls an Oxbridge interview technique. The theory goes that "you have to feel good about yourself but you have to come out of that room making the person interviewing you feel good about themselves as well". He has not lost his touch. The only question he won't be asked is what he thinks of Jim Davidson. There are limits.

shopping the sales

six of the best bargains



1 The Kinghill Collection: Paddy Campbell suit, down from £411 to £209. This fuchsia tweed suit is a bargain indeed. Kinghill sells designer clothes mail-order, and is selling various things at 50 per cent off in their sale. For example, an ice-blue merino angora Amanda Wakeley cowl neck tunic down from £297 to £148.50 or a Four Seasons parka reduced from £145 to £72.50. For details see below.



2 Crucial Trading: sisal matting down 25 per cent. Carpet looking shabby? Fancy starting the new year with a new floor covering? Crucial Trading has made substantial reductions on its coir, jute and sisal floorings. Trendy seagrass is down 25 per cent, but others have 50 per cent off, including Barley Twist Sisal (now £11.15 per sq m) and Old School Group Coir (now £6.38).



3 The Conran Shop: Fenice sofa, from £1555 to £775. Not only is The Conran Shop having a regular sale, it is having a two-day warehouse furniture sale on 6 and 7 January, where there will be discounts of 50 per cent and even lower. The store is laying on courtesy buses from the shop to the warehouse in SW16.



4 Racing Green: men's jacket down from £125 to £50. Racing Green, the classic casuals people, are offering discounts of 30 to 60 per cent on much of their stock. This men's wool/cashmere Doncaster jacket is a particularly good find; women's hacking jackets are also reduced from £115 to £50. Men's brightly coloured corduroy trousers are being reduced from £39 to £25.



5 Harrods: ostrich tote bag, from £125 to £80, zip-top bag, from £115 to £65. They say "There Is Only One Sale" and they do have a point. Harrods has some terrific bargains. For example: 40 per cent off a Harrods Own Label black single-breasted women's suit; men's single-breasted cashmere coats reduced from £675 to £375; 50 per cent off Harrods silver photo frames. But can you bear the crush?



6 David Mellor: 20 per cent off cutlery. The smart person's kitchen shop only has one sale a year, and there are some substantial reductions. Up to 50 per cent off assorted slightly damaged kitchen equipment, 20 per cent off steel cutlery and 10 per cent off various other tools, crockery and glassware. Worth a visit by serious kitchen buyers and those who are planning to buy some new speciality tools anyway.

SALES GUIDE: WHERE TO FIND WHAT AND WHEN

WHAT SHOPPERS IN OXFORD STREET WILL BE BUYING IN THE SALES

Neville Bower
(27)
paper maker from High Wycombe



I suppose I might go to the sales. If I do, it'll be for clothes but I probably won't come into town specially. I might look at stuff to do with computers though.

Ravin Ranji
(28)
IT Manager from Lewisham



I'll definitely go to the sales – I need a video. I know what the prices are and I'm looking for a good one, a Sony or JVC. I'll go to John Lewis, most high-street stores and Selfridges. But I won't be there at the crack of dawn.

Eileen & Charlie Monteith from Pimlico



We won't be coming up to Oxford Street for the sales – there are too many people. But we do go to the Army & Navy because it's near home. We'll get Christmas cards for next year and perhaps some decorations. But nothing else.

Linda Shanks
(44)
literary and TV agent from Islington



I will be going on the 1st of January – probably for my chap's Christmas presents, which will mainly be clothes. I'll go to Liberty and Paul Smith if it's on. I might see what Nicole Farhi has to offer.

Lynda Moylan
(22)
community artist from Australia



I'll look for bras, underwear and cosmetics – things that I can't normally afford. I usually am Oxfam shopped, but the sales give me an opportunity to get things I can't otherwise have – can you give me any tips on where to go?

Fred Morgans
(52)
security guard from Camberwell



I don't know that they are real. Aren't they just a gimmick? Originally, these stores inflate the real price, and the sales prices are just what they should have been in the first place. But I'll probably have a look around.

DEPARTMENT STORES

Debenhams
Starts 27 Dec at branches throughout England and Wales. Scottish branches start 26 Dec. 334-348 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-580 3000). General customer information 0171-408 3333.

Fenwick
Starts 27 Dec at 63 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-629 9161) and stores in Brent Cross, Windsor, Leicester, York, Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells. Sale at the large Newcastle branch starts 28 Dec. At Bond Street, Mondi collections will be reduced by 30-50 per cent; Fenn Wright & Manson, Betty Barclay collections by up to 50 per cent, and 30 per cent off Weekend Collections. Recuctions at Brent Cross include up to 50 per cent off French Connection, Jacques Vert and Bianca; 50 per cent off leather handbags and selected jewellery by Monet, Ciro and Napier.

Fortnum & Mason
Sale starts 28 Dec at 181 Piccadilly, London W1 (0171-734 8040).

Harrods
Smash-and-grab of the year starts 3 Jan at Knightsbridge, London SW1 (0171-730 1234). Reductions of up to half price are offered throughout the store. Account customers receive an additional 10 per cent off their shopping on day one of the sale. The ladies fashion department offers 40 per cent off Harrods Own Label black single-breasted suit, 30 per cent off Frank Usher and 30 per cent off Jasper Conran dress and occasion wear. For men, up to 50 per cent off silk ties, up to 40 per cent off men's knitwear and lambswool and cashmere scarves. Children get 40 per cent off David Charles dresses, 40 per cent off Sally Membery dresses and 30 per cent off Paul Smith. In china and glass, discounts of 50 per cent on Royal Scot 'Merle' hand-cut lead crystal and 55 per cent on Atlantis 'Lyric' full-cut lead crystal. All those Christmas movies you've seen will look larger than life on a Sanyo CTV 28" Nicam telly, down from £1,299 to £999. If you live outside London, or can't bear the crowds, Harrods is also offering discounts through its new sale catalogue. For a copy, ring 0800 730123, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Harvey Nichols
Starts 27 Dec at 109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (0171-235 5000). The sale is expected to last around three weeks. Account customers get an additional 10 per cent off the sale price for the first four days. Specific bargains are a secret, but expect reductions to be up to 50 per cent off selected items throughout the store.

House of Fraser
Starts 26 Dec in Scotland; 27 Dec in England and Wales. For store sites, ring 0171-963 2236.

Bargains in the cookshop include 40 per cent off Le Creuset cast iron cookware in American green and burgundy and 50 per cent off Judge satin stainless steel cookware. Over at the homewares department, Drifter goose-down tutu duvets (9 tog for spring, autumn and 4.5 tog for summer) are half the recommended retail price at £129. Also half price is Romantic embellished bed linen in cream and white, reduced from £70 to £35.

John Lewis Partnership
Clearance sale starts 28 Dec at 278-306 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 7711) at the following branches – Peter Jones, Sloane Square, John Lewis, Brent Cross, Bairdstone, Newcastle, John Lewis, Chapple, John Lewis, High Wycombe, John Lewis, Apsden and John Lewis, Edinburgh. The sale starts 29 Jan at all other branches including Bonds, Norwich; Cole Brothers, Sheffield; John Lewis, Bristol. Savings around the store of up to 50 per cent. Many bargains in furnishing fabrics, including John Lewis' own brand Jonelle, and china department. Reductions on Royal Doulton, Royal Albert, Portmeirion and Spode 'Blue' Italian ranges.

Christian Lacroix
Now on at 8a Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-235 2400) and 29 Old Bond Street, London W1 (0171-409 1994). Discounts of 30 per cent.

Comme des Garçons
Sale now on at 59 Brook Street, London W1 (0171-493 1258).

Reductions of up to 40 per cent off all remaining men's and women's collections, including Robe de Chambre, Comme des Garçons Tricot and Junya Watanabe.

French Connection
Starts 27 Dec at Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 1234) and

branches nationwide. Join the hordes sniffing out fabric bargains such as printed Armani silk down from £89.95 to £25, Liberty printed silk from £14.95 to £10 and Liberty Veruna wool from £22 to £15.

Georgina von Etzdorf velvet scarves are down from £95 to £65, English Eccentrics velvet devore scarves from £159 to £109. Liberty print watches with plain faces are reduced from £29.95 to £14.95 and Jean Paul Gautier jewellery is half price. Pewter-framed mirrors are half price from £59 to £29.

Marks & Spencer
End-of-season clearance will start 27 Dec at branches nationwide. Enquiries 0171-935 4422.

Selfridges
Starts 27 Dec at Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 1234). Armchair browsers can check out sale bargains in Selfridges Selection mail order catalogue, available now (0800 101101). The first week is Selfridges' busiest of the year. If you choose to join the 85,000 due through the doors on the first day, expect to find discounts from designer labels, furniture, china to carpets. Ladieswear discounts include Max Mara suits from £305 to £152, Betty Jackson jackets from £315 to £157 and Moschino T-shirts down from £49 to £34. 50 per cent off handbags by DKNY, Fendi and Osprey. Menswear discounts include up to 50 per cent off Hugo Boss, Nicole Farhi and YSL CK by Calvin Klein, 30 per cent off Paul Smith, Giorgio Armani coats and Polo Ralph Lauren.

CLOTHES

Amanda Wakeley
Starts 5 Jan for about two weeks at 80 Fulham Road, London SW3 (0171-584 4009). Reductions will be 40-80 per cent off, including samples.

Aquascutum
From 27 Dec at 100 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 6090). Reductions of 50-75 per cent of selected items.

Austin Reed *
Starts 27 Dec at Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 6789) and nationwide. Account customers can take advantage of an extra 5 per cent discount on sale prices on the first three days. Selected merchandise discounted by up to 50 per cent including men's wool coats reduced from £279 to £139, wool jackets from £179 to £129. Women's winter coat down from £279 to £139.

Brora
From 5 January to 27 January, at 344 King's Road, London W3 (0171-352 3697). Good discounts on cashmere and tweed. For example, chunky cable cashmere knits down from £225 to £180, cashmere skinny rib from £150 to £120, tweed jackets from £195 to £145.

Browns
Starts 4 Jan at 23-27 South Molton Street (0171-491 7833). Donna Karan dark camel one-button fitted jacket reduced from £1,180 to £600, matching skirt from £425 to £230. Menswear reductions include Browns Own Label suit £570, ladies' wool cashmere hacking jacket down from £165 to £50.

Chanel
Starts 6 Jan at 26 Old Bond Street, London W1 (0171-493 5040), 31 Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-235 6631). Reductions on ready-to-wear collections and shoes of about 30 per cent.

Christian Lacroix
Now on at 8a Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-235 2400) and 29 Old Bond Street, London W1 (0171-409 1994). Discounts of 30 per cent.

Comme des Garçons
Sale now on at 59 Brook Street, London W1 (0171-493 1258).

French Connection
Now on at 99 Long Acre, London WC2 and branches around the

country. General inquiries (0171-580 2507). 30-50 per cent off selected stock.

Herbert Johnson
Starts 4 Jan at 30 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-408 1174). Reductions of 50 per cent off couture hats, casual hats 25 per cent off and accessories 30 per cent off. Puff-on felt hat down from £105 to £79. Men's hats reduced by up to 60 per cent, a felt trilby is down from £95 to £60.

Hobbs
Now on at 1 Unit 17, The Piazza, Covent Garden, London WC2 (0171-836 9168) and branches nationwide. General customer information 0171-586 5550. Buy your party gear at prices discounted by up to 50 per cent. Strappy stilettos are reduced from £59.99 to £29.99, ballerina shoes from £23.99 to £19.99, satin cross-over dress from £64.99 to £32.99, bouclé flared dress from £49.99 to £29.99 and leopard skirt down from £49.99 to £29.99.

Marks & Spencer
Ends 27 Dec at branches nationwide. Enquiry number 0171-935 4422. Selected items are reduced by 30 per cent. Strappy stilettos are reduced from £59.99 to £29.99, ballerina shoes from £23.99 to £19.99, satin cross-over dress from £64.99 to £32.99, bouclé flared dress from £49.99 to £29.99 and leopard skirt down from £49.99 to £29.99.

Selfridges
Starts 27 Dec at 1 Unit 17, The Piazza, Covent Garden, London WC2 (0171-836 9168) and branches nationwide. General customer information 0171-586 5550. Buy your party gear at prices discounted by up to 50 per cent. Strappy stilettos are reduced from £59.99 to £29.99, ballerina shoes from £23.99 to £19.99, satin cross-over dress from £64.99 to £32.99, bouclé flared dress from £49.99 to £29.99 and leopard skirt down from £49.99 to £29.99.

Shoes

Church's
Starts 27 Dec at branches throughout the country. Central enquiry number is 01323 649408. Some styles reduced by more than 50 per cent. Church Belini men's shoes down from £199 to £99, ladies' illy-style high-heeled boot reduced from £120 to £60.

Dr Martens
Starts 4 Jan (midday) at 1-4 King Street, Covent Garden, London WC2 (0171-497 1460). Discounts of 25 per cent will be available on selected lines of footwear, clothing and accessories, with possibility of further reductions as the sale progresses.

Jones Bootmakers
Sale starts 27 Dec at branches throughout the country. Enquiry number is 01323-649408.

K Shoes
Started on 17 December at branches nationwide, will continue well into January. Substantial bargains include £15 off lots of boots and men's shoes; up to £20 on selected ladies' shoes.

Kingshill
This mail-order sale starts 1 Jan. Call 01494 890555. British Designer Collections catalogue £7.50. Diffusion catalogue, £3.50. Phones are staffed from 9am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 6pm Saturday, Sundays 7 and 14 Jan 9.30-4.30pm. Sale of designer fashions by mail order means you don't need to leave your armchair to hunt bargains. Half price on Paul Costelloe, Nicole Farhi, Jasper Conran, Amanda Wakeley.

Pied à terre
Starts 27 Dec at 32 Neal Street, London WC2 (0171-240 8148) and branches nationwide. Reductions include court shoes reduced from £79 to £40, pumps £65 to £30 and long boots from £35 to £50.

Ravel
Starts tomorrow at 184-188 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide. Mail order and enquiries on 0171-631 0224. Up to 33 per cent off this season's boots, bags and stiletto-heeled shoes.

Red or Dead
Starts 27 Dec at 1 & 23 Thomas Neal's, Earls Court, London WC2 (0171-240 5576) and branches nationwide. General inquiries (0171-730 9317). Selected stock reduced by 50 per cent. Sixties-style knee-length nylon boots in gold, black or rust reduced from £120 to £60.

Small and Tall Shoe Shop
Sale of women's shoes in large or small sizes. Sale for large sizes (8½-11½) runs from 27 Dec to 6 Jan. Small sizes (12½-2½) will be reduced from 10 Jan to 20 Jan. 71 York Street, London W1 (0171-723 5321). All current stock will be reduced.

SQ & Q
Starts Boxing Day at branches nationwide. Blanket reductions on several product lines, including 20 per cent off lightbulbs, a third off discontinued kitchens, 25 per cent off selected lawnmowers, strimmers and hedge trimmers and 20 per cent off house plants. Other bargains include a Country Cottage bathroom suite reduced from £295 to £395 and a Style 400 Shower Heater down from £39.99 to £69.99.

The Conran Shop
Starts 6 Jan until 21 Jan at 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 (0171-589 7401). The Conran Shop are also holding a two-day warehouse furniture sale 6 Jan (10am-6.30pm) and 7 Jan (10am-4pm); discounts of 30-40 per cent.

Space NK
Starts 28 December, ends 13 January. At Crossways, Church Farmham, Surrey (01428 714014). Sales decorative bathroom and kitchen objects. Some massive discounts, including marble bathroom suites reduced from

shopping the sales



How to spot a really good deal

There are marked-down goods and there are genuine bargains. They are not the same. By Karen Falconer

Did you know that when you visit a post-Christmas sale you may be splashing out on specially bought-in merchandise rather than genuinely reduced goods? Surely not. I hear you cry, convinced that the great tradition of bi-annual sales has not entirely given way to the promotional farce we've come to expect for much of the year. Why would so many people queue and fight if there was nothing substantial to be gained?

The truth is that there are bargains to be had in the sales – end-of-season merchandise, discontinued lines, perhaps even loss leaders – but they may be thinner on the rails than you think. Sales originated as a way of getting rid of last season's stock. But with increasingly good stock control systems in the bigger stores, there is less surplus to sell off.

However, the January sales have become almost an institution with consumers, so stores have to virtually create bargains to keep them happy.

"Retailers have to provide a feel-good factor for purchases so the consumer can justify it," said Martin Fisher, officer on

prices for the Institute of Trading Standards Administration. Sales, he added, together with the enormous signs in shop



If you want a real bargain, brave the crowds and beware the stack of navy blue jumpers in small, medium and large. Photos: Nicholas Turpin

one-off things, something weird and wonderful, or upholstery that has had 200 people sitting on it."

Indeed, most shops offer reductions of up to 50 per cent at the outset of a sale, often increasing the discount as the sale progresses. Fashion is particularly good for reductions as most merchandise cannot be carried over into the new season. In other areas – furnishings, electricals, homewares – markdowns are less dramatic unless the goods are soiled or being discontinued.

"We start planning our sale in October," a Heals' spokeswoman explained. "Normally, our discounts are between 10 and 30 per cent, or 50 per cent if we are trying to clear something. Often, our bargains are

stuff that stores may not be able to stock at full price because of the lesser image."

Mr Fisher puts it more strongly: "I don't feel that the public gets what they think they're getting when they see a sale sign. They expect a real bargain, but products are much more gimmick. There will be shops that run sales in the traditional way but they are increasingly the small independents. Companies run by shareholders have to play to the current market rules."

Buying in special goods is

the modern-day sales trend; most of the major high-street players now do it. The problem is that many consumers are not able to, or aware of the need to differentiate between a real bargain and what is nothing more than a cheaper product at a cheaper price. In the general mayhem that sales are,

they may snap up goods which otherwise they would not have done. However, there are ways to spot the imposters.

A Code of Practice on Sales goods stipulates that they have to have been on sale at the full price in the store for at least 28 days during the previous six months. Bought-in merchandise obviously has not been marked as a "special purchase" item, or as reduced from the recommended

Retail Price (a manufacturer's suggested price which may bear absolutely no relation to what the product could realistically sell for) as opposed to the previous selling price.

There are other tell-tale signs, even without the signing.

"If you have a stack of navy jumpers in small, medium and large," explained Harrods, "it is an indication that you are buying something that has been bought in." Genuine sale goods tend to be one-offs or obscure sizes, or items with strange prints on them.

It may be that a customer is quite happy to snap up a special purchase product; retailers wouldn't stock them if people didn't buy them. After all, it can be quite handy to purchase a stack of shirts for work, or the extra plates for the kitchen at a cheap price. But, for the genuine bargain hunters, it is worth remembering that most small shops really do have to offload one season's stock before they can buy in the next and, therefore, the markdowns will be on merchandise

they actually sold.

For my money, forget 10 per cent discounts: it's half-price bargains on quality goods that I'm after, and, if they're not there, forget it. I'll take my money home again.

The sensible shopper's sales guide

By Melanie Rickey

Christmas is finally upon us. Phew. Time to sit back, watch some entertainment (if not mind-numbing) reruns of blockbuster movies, eat fancy food, and put the hassle of Christmas shopping behind us.

Or is it? The January sales are just around the corner and for some avid consumers, the thrill of catching a bargain, or squabbling over the last pair of leather kitten-heeled slingbacks in a size 6, is far too addictive and exciting to pass up.

If you enjoy shopping for clothes and its associated pleasantries, you won't be happy shopping during the sales. Sales staff pay little attention to you, the changing rooms in most stores become communal (if they aren't already), and you may be swayed by the price reduction on garment rather than whether it suits you or not.

The only way to "do the sales" is to go out with what you want firmly in mind and stick to it. A friend of mine set off one year armed with a newly-acquired credit card and was so impressed by the bargains that "sale mania" set in.

She went up to her limit on sales bargains from the likes of Armani, Nicole Farhi and Whistles. But when she got them home, the Nicole Farhi coat was a bit too long, the Whistles suit was the wrong shade of brown, and the Armani dress, just a little too tight around the bust.

All in all, a day of fun turned into a day of disaster, as returning sale goods can be a nightmare. Certain stores offer credit notes or exchange on goods returned – this is the policy of Whistles and Nicole Farhi. Armani will refund at the discretion of the management, but few stores give money back unless the goods are damaged.

My friend was lucky, she wasn't stuck with her impulse buys. So take note: it always works to your advantage to ask the manager of the shop you are buying from about their returns policy.

To do the sales the sensible way, take stock of your wardrobe. Check off how many pairs of trousers you own, how many suits, skirts, shirts, coats, and evening dresses – even shoes and casual wear should come under scrutiny. This done, really think about what you wear on a day to day basis. If more than half of your clothes are defunct, sales therapy should give your wardrobe a face lift.

It is best to look for basics. If you need a few new jumpers, sales are great because knitwear is always generously reduced. Good classic suits are always a good buy, as are winter jackets. Never go for a frivolous impulse buy, like a lime-green through split evening dress, go for what you need. Sales staff are always eager to tell you you look a million dollars in something. Remember that the goods on sale are goods the store has been unable to shift thus far.

Three top tips for sales shopping:
• If it doesn't feel right, don't buy it, no matter what the sales assistant says.
• Check the returns policy of the store before making your purchase.

• Look around. You may buy that near-perfect black polo neck at one store, only to find a better version even cheaper somewhere else.

Good thing

Boots Fine Foods, from £2.30



In the packaging fest that is Christmas, Boots have done a brave thing. They have wrapped their fine foods – mulled wine set (£2.50), 1lb Christmas pudding with brandy (£4.30) etc – in nothing more than reusable tins and a lick of silver paper or cellophane. In doing so, it has saved 6,000 tonnes of packaging. OK, so their Batman bubble bath is a triumph of plastic over content, but at least they have made an effort. I may even go out and buy a jar of their peach conserve with peach schnapps (£2.30). Purely in the interests of the planet, you understand.



Checkout The Christmas Chapter

The Christmas Chapter, 162 Sloane Street, London SW1

What is it? An off-shoot of Breeds, the upmarket cutlery and chinaware shop in Tunbridge Wells, The Christmas Chapter is a shrine to Christmas. Well, to Christmas decorations. For the past five years, Breeds has turned over its basement to Christmas decorations. The idea has worked so well that this year it opened three other outlets: Sloane Street, Kingston-upon-Thames and the Lakeside Shopping Centre, Thurrock. They stay open until the end of January.

Atmosphere: Slightly weird. It's like walking into a large picture book in which a forest has invaded a house. The shop is filled with themed and decorated trees, and in one corner, a table is set for a casual Christmas lunch (who doesn't have gold baubles delicately placed among their gold rimmed plates and glasses?). Beware the low-flying decorative objects.

Customers: A mixture of well-heeled locals, awe-struck tourists, and the simply curious. Interestingly, there are no children: wise parents leave them elsewhere as one look at all the loot would send them into a frenzy. According to staff, most customers are overwhelmed by the stock. However, they will help gaping customers to create a theme at home and to make up perfect bows with which to dress presents or decorate your tree.

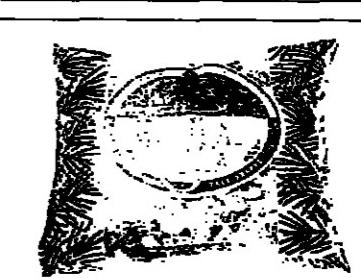
What to buy: The giant golden papier mache angels are a must, if you have money to burn, at £200. Birds with wire feet which twist around the branches of the tree cost £1.95-£4.99 (the white dove is a current best-seller). Bags of glossy red stars or apples £2.95; small teddy bears, rag dolls and soldiers are £3.95 and part of a folk art theme. Patchwork and applique Christmas stockings are £24.95.

Do not buy: Terrifyingly ugly Father Christmas heads which look like they have been pickled – guaranteed to give children nightmares (£1.95).

Mad thing

Christmas tree pasta shapes, £1.66 per packet

You've read everything you can lay your hands on about how to stage-manage the Christmas meal. You've stuffed the turkey or you're boiling a ham; the bread sauce, red cabbage and God only knows what else are on the go, but you've forgotten something: you haven't planned a meal for Christmas Eve. Don't panic. The Funfood Pasta Company has the answer – Christmas tree pasta shapes. Perfect for that last-minute tuna surprise or macaroni cheese. If nothing else, they should



amuse fractious, over-excited children. Stockists: Gill Wing Gift Shop, 194 Upper Street, Islington, London N1. IRO. Selected branches of Tesco (call 01992-632 222 for nearest branch).

Heavy cold, high temperature?



THE LITTLE YELLOW BOX
THAT'S A GREAT BIG HELP

ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

* Trade Mark

shopping

Two days to go. Presents? Panic!

Why do you always leave your Christmas shopping to the last minute? Is it fear of death? Low self-esteem? Acute procrastination disorder? That's the theory according to one academic. Whatever the reason, Jim White will be present-hunting in the convenience store again this year

Joseph R Ferrari, of the Centre for Life Studies, Cazenovia College, New York, has the perfect excuse for not doing his Christmas shopping. "Sorry, honey," he can say. "I was too busy stuck down the Mall researching why people leave their Christmas shopping to the last minute."

In the land where the works of Madonna have inspired a university degree course, and an intimate knowledge of knitting patterns can land you a doctorate, Dr Ferrari's research has the snif of real scientific rigour about it. "Christmas and procrastination" is the title of his paper. "Explaining the lack of diligence at a real-world task deadline."

Dr Ferrari examined 240 mall shoppers, measuring "procrastination scores" (on arousal and avoidance measures), the closeness of the measurement to Christmas, and shoppers' rationales for why they were shopping at that particular time. He reckoned procrastinators were "motivated by arousal from working against a deadline and attributed their lack of diligence to job-related attributes (eg work, business commitments) that compelled them to begin shopping at the last possible opportunity." Or they were motivated by a need to "avoid situations involving threats to self-esteem, attributing their postponed shopping to personal attributes (eg lack of energy, indecisiveness, perceived task aversiveness) reflecting their belief in their own inability."

So there we have it. The reason I was standing, at 11 o'clock on the evening of one Christmas Eve in a motorway service station, deciding whether my mother would prefer the shameful box of Mill Tray in my right hand or the wilting pot plant in my left was because I was consumed by self-loathing. Nothing to do with the 48-hour bender from which I had just emerged; nothing to do with the car not starting; nothing to do with working for a man who combined the less generous instincts of Scrooge and Grinch in one miserly, misanthropic package of a kind which includes leaving work before five on Christmas Eve as a firing offence.

However, Dr Ferrari does have a point. Since Christmas now begins in the shops the moment the fireworks are put away, there are 50 days in which to



Jim White scans the shelves of Tesco Metro for that special gift

Photograph: Dillon Bryden

organise a buy-round. There must be a reason why so many of us refrain from doing anything at all about it until the last plausible nano-second. Fear of death is my explanation: a postponement of that which we know is inevitable in the misplaced conviction

that the act of putting it off will somehow prevent it happening. But, like the need to throw up after the office party, in the end there is nothing you can do to stop it happening, so you comfort yourself by waiting until the last possible moment.

The lot of the invertebrate last-minuter is helped considerably if you have money. Then you can hit the shops like a credit-card fuelled locust, scooping the gaudy off the shelves with a recklessness that will be regretted only when the bill arrives at the month end.

The shopping areas of airports can be very useful in this regard: who, you wonder, as you pass them by for 363 days of the year, would ever want the shamelessly over-priced, offensively pointless items that abound there? The answer is: on Christmas Eve when

you have so far bought precisely nothing, your family and friends. And best of all, the staff will gift wrap them. Last year a colleague bought in the ten-minute window he had at Heathrow before the last Yuletide flight to Belfast, was called, a "Santa's sack of gifts": saucy underwear from the Knickerbox franchise, Body Shop smelties, a boy's football shirt, and that stalwart of the procrastinator: booze, lots of it. All was popped on to the credit card, all was scrumptiously wrapped and all was woeingly received by grateful relatives, astonished by the thought and attention lavished upon them.

Penury, though, compounds the adrenalin-rush panic of the last-minute. As a student, I can remember standing bemused in 24-hour newsagents debating whether the £2.35 in my pocket would best be served buying the girlfriend's parcel of the *Christmas and New Year* copy of *The Radio Times*, or a jumbo pack of *Juicy Fruit*; always bearing in mind it had to stretch to procure presents for mum, dad and two siblings as well. Fortunately, then, I'd had the foresight to bag the girlfriend a *Salon-sized bottle of WASH 'n' GO* from the discount chemists already.

There are people who maintain that waiting until the last minute opens up a huge vista of bargain opportunities: that, after five on Christmas Eve, turkey prices tumble to a penny a pound; that Christmas trees are given away; that street traders pay you to take boxes of Santa hats off their hands. But to discover such giveaways requires the kind of organisation and foresight not familiar to the procrastinator: my experience of the last-minute universally involves paying the recommended retail price and above.

And this year, thanks to a change in the law, the disorganised have been given an extension to their deferral. For the first time that Christmas Eve has fallen on a Sunday, we have a whole extra shopping day in which to delay. And if, at 3pm, standing in your local Tesco Metro hapless with a pot-plant, a Dogs '96 calendar and a festive pine car-freshener you are approached by an academic with a clipboard asking you what you are doing, just ask him a question in response: if he's so clever, when does he do his Christmas shopping?

...but it's not too late to order a thoughtful gift

By Ann Crookenden

Basically, there's now only three-quarters of a shopping day to Christmas. OK, you still have time to make a last-minute dash up the high street, zoom round a motorway service station, or spend half an hour dithering in an off-licence, but you are cutting it a bit fine. And, all right, some shops will be opening on Christmas Eve, but do you really want to spend the day in a bad-tempered chase that results in two packs of lavender guest soap and a decorative jar of sun-dried tomatoes?

In any case, the person you've forgotten to buy anything for probably lives 200 miles away. So you've had it. Well, no, not quite. Here are some ways the last-minute shopper can still save face.

Gifts

Global Presents Shopping Service will send gifts to addresses in central London up to Christmas Eve. Simply call them up, tell them what kind of thing you want, and they will leaf through their catalogue and find the exact thing. Ideas range from a cashmere scarf from Johnson of Elgin

(£55), a pencil holder made from faux leather book spines (£18), Links teddy bear silver cufflinks (£62), a Wallace & Grommet alarm clock (£26.90), or a Fischer Price Touch and Listen cordless phone for under-threes (£6.99). They also have a good stock of drinks, including liqueurs and malt whisky.

Gift wrapping costs £2 extra, but messages are free. Delivery from £3.95. If you're desperate to send something outside London for Christmas, they can arrange it but it will cost a lot. Call 0171-731 3000 to place an order or message <http://www.shoplondon.co.uk> on the Internet.

Flowers

Interflora florists will be running out of Madonna lilies and poinsettias but they should be able to rustle up something. And most of them will deliver on Christmas Eve if you ring early today. If you're lucky, they'll be able to do you a Christmas basket of red carnations, fir and holly (£19.95 to £29.95), a box of 18 Belgian chocolates, gift wrapped with a spray

of flowers (£14.95), a planted basket with cyclamen, ivy etc (from £19.50-£27.50). Failing that, you'll have to make do with a bouquet of whatever they've got left.

If you call the Interflora Freecall number (0500 434343), they will connect you to your nearest Interflora shop. Alternatively, the central Flowerline (01529 45454) will sort out the order for you. Call today, if possible before lunchtime, for Christmas Eve delivery. Or call on Christmas Eve for deliveries from the 27th.

Hampers

It's also not too late to send a hamper, but only to people in London, unfortunately, if you want it there by Christmas. Basket Express does a tempting range: from the £450 Premier Hamper (Bollinger champagne, Glenmorangie malt whisky, silver-plated serving spoons...) to a chocolate basket decorated with festive ribbons, berries and baubles and filled to the brim with Belgian chocolates (from £30). There's also a Boxing Day Breakfast basket (£59.50) or A Taste of

America, India, Italy or France (from £30). Add your own message. Delivery costs about £7.28. If you want to order something outside London, Basket Express will deliver between Christmas and New Year (£12 delivery). Call/fax them on 0171-289 2636.

Too late for Christmas week, but there for New Year:

Drinks Direct: Call today, and you could have a bottle of vintage Veuve Cliquot on a doorstep anywhere in the country on the 27th. There are 1,500 bottles to choose from, or send one of their gift packs. The Croft & Jenga pack (a 10-year-old port in a box with Jenga the wobbly wooden tower game), would revive flagging festive cheer for £29.99, or the Iona hamper (£25) which includes a 1994 Sauvignon Blanc, a 1993 Petite Sirah, Belgian chocolates, plum pudding, fruit cake, shortbread and more would help restock a post-Christmas larder. You can add your own message. All parcels are sent by courier, costing from £5.99. Call 0800 232221.



Tesco Direct: Orders can be placed now for courier deliveries on Thursday 28th. Hampers are sold out, but a range of wines is available, and flowers, too. The "Luxury Bouquet" sounds suitably festive: gyp, chrysanthemums, gerbera, carnations, lilies, orchids, for £23.99. Messages included. Call 0800 403 403, 9am-8pm, or fax 01992 644464. Internet: telesales@tesco.e-mail.com

Thorntons Chocexpress: Whizzing a box of truffles round in time for new year might also save your skin. Prices from £9.95 (200g of pralines, truffles and mousse) to £36.95 for the 1370g Continental selection (100 chocolates). There's a charge for wrapping. The drawback here is that all chocolates travel by post, so they should arrive for New Year if you order before the 27th, but there are no guarantees. Call the ChocLine: 01763 241 444.

the thing about...

Jars of food

Imagine the wails if the delicatessens started selling kelims: if the corner shop started stocking a line in recycled, hand-blown glassware; if you could buy hand-made, cast-iron, hessian covered sofas at Asda. It would be like straying on to God's territory: warnings of unleashing monsters on to the world would abound in the consumer magazines, pressure groups would rattle out dire warnings about job losses, the Conrans would give interviews showing that the quality would be impaired. Food shops sell food; design shops sell design: that is how it should be.

Except that the design shops don't really see it that way. Every good decorative emporium now has department – or at the very least a chrome-



Foodie jars: bought by a particular brand urban person who never cooks

plated five-tier shelf – stacked with dinky food to grace your kitchen. Not least about these are the olive products. Perhaps this is related to the peculiar British fear of things Mediterranean – it's not so long, after all, since olive oil was something you bought in tiny bottles from the chemist to clear your earwax – but things you would expect to find in any old Italian village shop turn up here as luxury designer goods at luxury designer prices. It is in these outlets that you will find your unsulfited olive oil with a twig or tarragon or bunch of chilli peppers bobbing around the bottom of it and a glorious Tuscan sunset on the label.

Safeway may have caught up with pesto and dried tomatoes, but they have a long way to go before they stock foodie jars: bought by a particular brand urban person who never cooks

Country Living, also have bunches of dried herbs and copper pans hanging on old laundry racks suspended from the kitchen ceiling. "Look!" proclaims their interior decor. "I am a busy person and a wealthy one, but really I long for the simple things in life: fresh fruit shared with friends, a bowl of pasta with pine kernels, the smell of new-baked bread..."

My theory is that they are bought by that particular urban brand of person who never cooks, but who likes to keep a decorative kitchen nonetheless. The type of people who have other people in for drinks before going out to a restaurant.

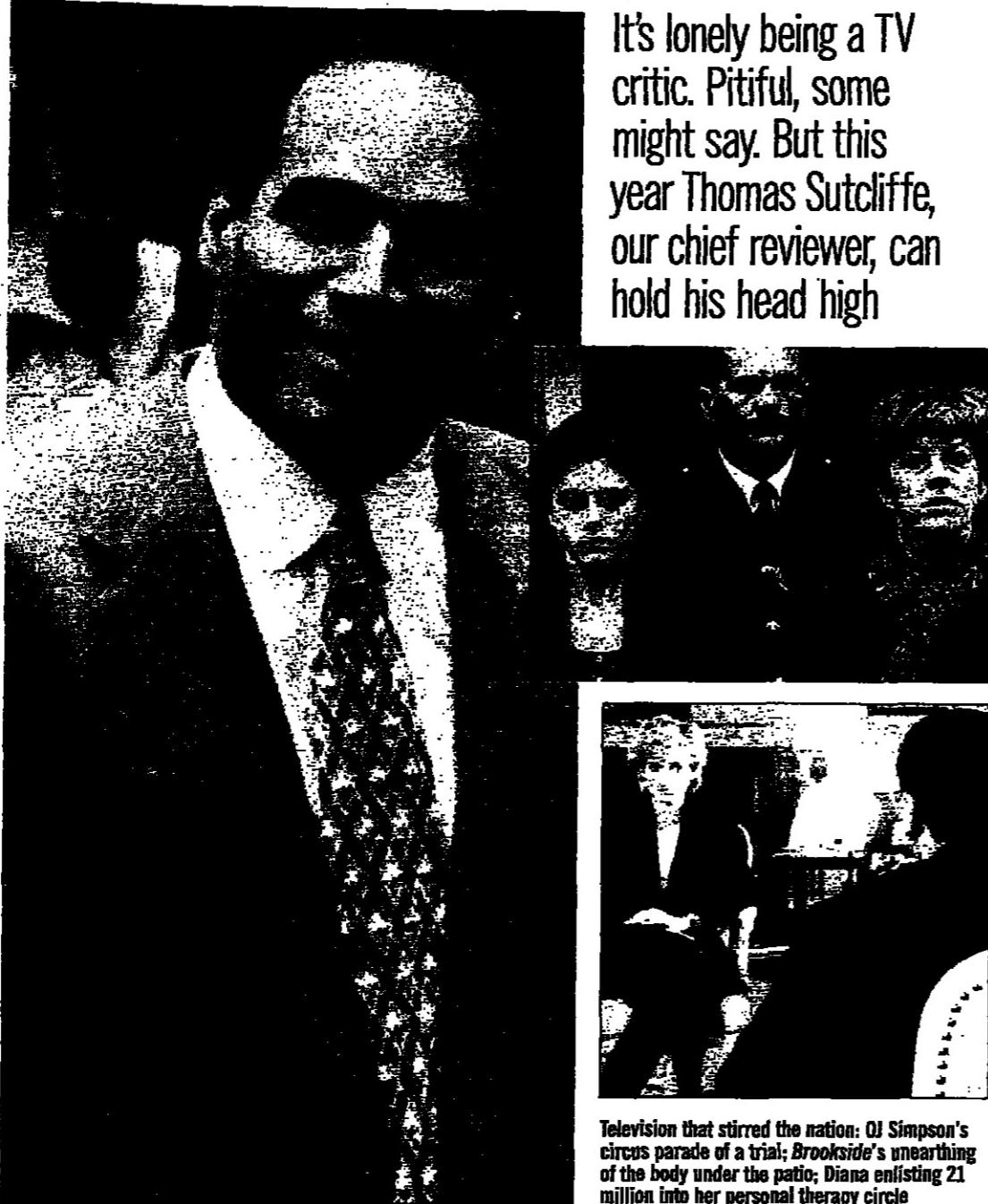
These people, who nurture a secret longing to have their house appear in

rare that these beauties get eaten at their best, when they're still fresh. As for the marinating jars, they'll sit casually on a side somewhere until the next party, when the local dips spoons them, cries "Ah, olives!" and pops the seal on the top.

Of course, they also make great non-controversial presents. Presents to give to the unexpected guest that no-one warned you about. Gifts to take to partners' mothers. Gifts that say that you're a person of good taste and the recipient is a person of culinary discernment. This is a good time of year for sales of tarty oils, as it is a good time for posh soap. After all, both are better than a pair of socks.

Serena Mackesy

It's OK, admit it, you were watching television



It's lonely being a TV critic. Pitiful, some might say. But this year Thomas Sutcliffe, our chief reviewer, can hold his head high

Television that stirred the nation: OJ Simpson's circus parade of a trial; Brookside's unearthing of the body under the patio; Diana enlisting 21 million into her personal therapy circle

Watching television has never been an entirely respectable activity. As a television critic this is borne in upon you with particular force, because of the gloomy knowledge that the activity to which you devote a large portion of your waking hours constitutes, for many people, a simple shorthand for mental vacuity. Two recent examples come to mind. The first occurred in the context of an industrial accident hearing, considering compensation for a man who had a red-hot metal bar lodged in his brain (he was forced to pull it out himself, a grisly scene which we can no doubt look forward to seeing reconstructed on 999). His lawyer argued that before the accident his client had been a useful member of society, a figure of ambition and drive; now, he told the court, silk handkerchief dabbing at his eyes, the poor man was reduced to watching television all day. The second turned up in this week's television profile of the comedian Peter Cook, a man who began with smart London society at his feet and finished by amassing an unmatchable knowledge of obscure cable channels. It was one thing to appear on bad television programmes, it was suggested, quite another thing to watch them. The glowing membrane of the screen effuses a moral osmosis, sucking merit from those who merely watch and transferring it to the glittering creatures who are watched.

As a model for a working life you can understand that this isn't particularly appealing – a choice between sad disability or a sad dissipation of talent. So you may suspect that my motives aren't entirely pure when I try to persuade you that the past year's television has been unusually provoking. Bear with me though, because this is not an argument about quality, more a suggestion that this was a year in which television powerfully reminded us of its ability to stir people en masse, an ability that video and satellite have already begun to blur. We were reminded more than once that television may be the closest thing we have to that fabled and elusive textile – the fabric of the nation.

Sometimes this was so in a rather literal sense. When Princess Diana chose to enlist 21 million people to her personal

therapy circle, she not only broke with royal convention but also raised serious constitutional issues about the future of the monarchy. Those watching did so for a huge range of motives – prurience, trepidation, gleeful republicanism, mournful fealty – but the effect of that transmission was of a moment of national attentiveness. I looked out from the Canary Wharf tower as the programme was broadcast and I don't think I was simply being fanciful in detecting an unusual lightness to the traffic that night. In television histories the Queen's Coronation is usually offered as the first great occasion of cathode-ray communion, so it's intriguing to note that, more than 40 years on, almost exactly the same number of people watched Diana strip off the dignity of monarchy as watched Elizabeth assume it in 1953. "Did you see it?" people said in the confidence that there could be little doubt what "it" was.

Such moments are rare these days – but that wasn't the only occasion in 1995 when television forced people to abandon their own timetables for those of the broadcasters. Even in Britain, the end of the OJ trial made office workers huddle round the nearest screen, arrested by the pay-off to the year's most extended soap storyline. Even in Britain, largely protected from the twitchy derangement of round-the-clock coverage, the arrival of the verdict was a moment of signal drama, which left more than a few viewers feeling shaken in a way they couldn't quite account for. The clichéd phrase about "all eyes being on you" came close to a dull statement of the facts.

For many commentators, the real guilty party in the end was television itself, culpable of transforming justice into a game-show, sullying the truth by mounting a shameless auction for pieces of it. I was less convinced myself – the great revelation of the Simpson trial (made unignorable by the circus parade that surrounded it) may have been unpalatable but it was also overdue. A crack had been widening in the national foundations and suddenly someone threw open the cellar door and let the light in.

I'm not fanciful enough to believe that American television will do much to make good the damage, but it is inaccurate to see it as causing it in the first place. What's more, though television proved an efficient conductor of base motives and crude prejudices, it also provided its own antidote. There was a certain oddity in the sight of broadsheet papers, perfectly happy to summarise coverage themselves, inveighing against the pernicious misrepresentation of broadcasting the evidence in its tedious, pernickety entirety.

Nothing else in the year could hope to match the intensity of those two television moments – though there were other interviews and other trials that commanded our conversations. In June, Mrs Thatcher gave an audience to David Frost, reminding us of her ability to swoop instantly from beatific condescension to low junk-yard growl. She would not be returning, she said, unless her country called for her, the Maid of Grantham, in some great national emergency. The words came out soft and husky, stroking the interviewer as if he had an angora fur and was curled up in her lap. Earlier in the year, *Brookside* had finally bowed to the physics of patio burial – the infallible rule that what goes down must come up – and disinterred Trevor Jordache in a five-episode special that ran every night of the week. It was one of those storylines that make a spark leap between life and fiction, like the sudden jolt of tinfoil on a filling – women's groups demonstrated outside the offices of Merseyside Television, the production company which makes *Brookside*, and battered women wrote in their hundreds to the actress who plays Mandy Jordache.

There was much else that was memorable in the year, of course – dramas such as *Jake's Progress* and *Les Blair's Bliss*, a remarkably consistent run of observational documentaries from *Modern Times*, excellent one-off comedies from Andy Hamilton and the distinguished historical journalism of *The Death of Yugoslavia*. But where those programmes set people talking, they did so in small parishes of the national consciousness, parishes bounded by class or occupation. There are times when television can break those barriers, times when watching television isn't so much a sad demonstration of inadequacy but a participation in a national gathering.

reviews

TELEVISION Farm Fantasia (C4)

Four legs good, two legs dreadful. Jasper Rees cringes on behalf of humanity at a 'multi species' *Sleeping Beauty*

As a critic, you are often castigated for mocking too quickly. Occasionally, though, you're given very little room for manoeuvre. When a documentary about a ballet starring farmyard animals crops up, it's a case of mock or be mocked. And for once, you can mock with a conscience cleared by the fact that the target, an animal behaviourist, eco-farmer and full-time fruitcake, has a hide of reinforced rhinoceros.

Farm Fantasia snooped at preparations for the performance of a "multi-species" *Sleeping Beauty* on a farm near Dartmoor.

The good fairy was played by a sparrow tourniqueted in tinsel. Sundry llamas pranced about in something approximating to unison. A pair of horses lay down and went to sleep, apparently as instructed but possibly making a valid and spontaneous critique. A monstrous bull called Castor, so named presumably because of the size of his pollux, played the king. And a couple of humans were roped in from the professional dance world, doubtless lured by the prospect of

television exposure from which, it transpires, their careers may never recover.

Their choreographer was Marthe Kiley-Worthington, who lavished all her directorial ingenuity on the quadruped performers and slung comically vague instructions at their two-legged colleagues: "Now you two lie down, or a lift or something." The word "eccentric", conveniently used on these occasions, is pitifully inadequate when it comes to describing her ideas about encouraging animals to express themselves. Her plan is to engender an art-form that the more professionally minded will take up.

They say that no man is an island, but meet a woman who is. She inhabits a kind of boggy paradise that she has both imagined and subdued, where man, animal and machine do the work, while woman dances steps for Andean pack-mammals. Marthe by name, her nature is to make others martyrs to her art.

Such machinery as there was on the farm was mostly pre-lapsarian. The straw for a new thatch was threshed by a hurdy-

gurdy that was less Heath Robinson and more Robinson Crusoe. There was a tractor, but Mrs Kiley-Worthington confessed that she had avoided learning to operate it. This chore fell to her partner Chris. Your fairly standard loony longhorn, he was a comparatively earthbound onlooker who moaned blamelessly, "Why's it always the bloke who has to drive the tractor?" Some stereotyped roles in this particular animal kingdom are clearly immutable.

The voice-over tried to keep a straight face, but couldn't quite mask a snigger. As the film quietly pointed out, through images of sheep being shepherded and cattle being herded, it's possible for humankind to choreograph large groups of animals without roping in Tchaikovsky. If the well of human knowledge has been enlarged by this daff project in one indisputable way, it is because that hole in the dictionary where the collective noun for a group of llamas should be has now been filled. For future reference, it's a *corps de llamas*.

CLASSICAL Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (QEII, London)

Adrian Jack listens with fresh ears to a trio of 150-year-old scores brought back to new life by the sound of period instruments

Franc Berwald's *Sinfonie singulière* fused to be heard quite often on the radio, but Wednesday night offered a rare concert performance, in which Paavo Järvi, son of Neeme, conducted the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. All the music in the programme belonged to the 1840s. Berwald was born in Stockholm, the year before Schubert, though he outlived him by 40 years. His *Sinfonie singulière* has a lot of the breezy classical radiance of Schubert's earlier symphonies without their tunefulness. In the first movement, there's also a brief blaze of woodwind and brass that hints at a less extravagant Berlioz; more fancifully speaking, it has an open-air quality that pre-echoes Carl Nielsen.

Berwald's orchestration is very clear,

and though there's an elusive, understated quality about his actual invention, his musical argument is lucid, sometimes highlighted by abrupt little motifs like punctuation marks. The symphony's middle movement is a Scherzo with an extended slow introduction and epilogue, deftly devised. Singular it certainly is – Berwald seems to have been happily free of the post-Beethoven inferiority complex – and the music sounded marvellously fresh on period instruments.

It wasn't so easy to create the same sense of newness in Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. The soloist, Thomas Zehetmair, evidently wanted a more rugged approach than usual and rugged at phrases rather wilfully – Mendelssohn's fully composed cadenza in the first movement became almost unrecognisable. Both soloist and conductor pushed the central Andante rather ungracefully along, while the normally skittering finale was a bit on the slow side and trotted rather tamely. Not a complete success, but at least this unsavvy performance made you listen.

But with Schumann's Second Symphony, after the interval, Järvi levelled up the score. All Schumann's symphonies have been greatly underrated by critical convention, and the Second particularly so. Wednesday's lucid perfor-

mance, with straight, valveless trumpets that looked a bit like giant safety-pins, and really woody-sounding woodwind, as well as light kettle-drums played with hard sticks, proved that there is nothing wrong with Schumann's much-maligned orchestration.

My only misgiving concerned a lack of definition in some important cellos lines in the first movement, at least as played here. And really, the orchestra did not need to shatter the atmosphere with a burst of noisy tuning before the Scherzo second movement. In the first of its two trio sections, Järvi controlled the fluctuating speeds with particular aplomb, and far more decisively than usual. The woodwind came into their own in the relay of little solos Schumann gives them in the glorious slow movement – rather analytical-sounding in this performance. Oddly enough in the finale, the first clarinet, sailing in with his inspirational new phrase, was a bit too quiet; but otherwise, there was nothing wanting in the sense of Schumann's hard-won triumph.

THE WEEK IN REVIEW
David Benedict

THE COMEDY
PRIVATES ON PARADE

OVERVIEW

Critical view

ON VIEW

OUR VIEW

THE FILM
ACE VENTURA 2: WHEN NATURE CALLS

At every possible cinema near you this Christmas.

I think not. Parents, grandparents and the like, see the lovingly directed *The Indian in the Cupboard* or *Babe* instead.

THE GIG
SIMPLY RED

Big hits, big tours, big money: 10 years on from their first single, high-pitched Mick Hucknall and the lads are selling albums by the lorryload and showing little sign of wear and tear.

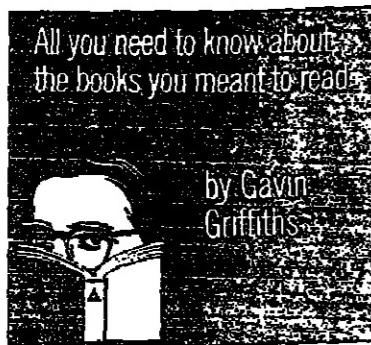
A new rhythm section and a highly professional staging to make sure you get your money's worth.

THE PLAY
TRAINSPOTTING

Irving Welsh's novel about the highs and lows of Scottish junkies, dramatised and directed by Harry Gibson who turned it into a sell-out on a UK tour and won cult status at the Edinburgh Festival.

Not for the squeamish. The makers of *Shallow Grave* have filmed it for release in January. Will it be the same as actually witnessing it live?

books



This week:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (1843)
by Charles Dickens

Plot: With Scrooge, Dickens moulded a figure of mythic proportions; he also put the finishing touches to the modern concept of Christmas as a cow exhibition of communal gluttony.

It is Christmas Eve. Scrooge loves money and hates people; he rejects the friendship of his nephew and refuses charity to the poor. "Solitary as an oyster," he wants to be left alone, believing social responsibility ends with the payment of taxes.

The ghost of his dead business partner appears to him; Marley is compelled to wander the earth, chained to the boxes of cash that he had forged in life; his punishment is that he is helpless to relieve the human suffering around him. If Scrooge is to evade a similar fate, he must follow the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future who are to lead him to self-knowledge.

Christmas Past shows Scrooge to have been a neglected child; this results in an inability to love as an adult. Scrooge turns away from the affections of a young woman who subsequently marries and has dozens of children. The joys of family life are not to be his.

Christmas Present offers a panoramic vision of Christmas celebrated across the country, from lighthouse keepers to Scrooge's clerk Bob Cratchit, his wife, and litter of little Cratchits, including Tiny Tim. Finally Scrooge is exposed to the terrifying allegorical children, Ignorance and Want.

Christmas Future puts Scrooge onto the trail of a mysterious stranger who was universally reviled in life and is now treated with contempt in death. His weather-beaten gravestone stands unmourned; on it is carved "Ebeneezer Scrooge". As Scrooge reads his future, he faints.

He wakes up. It is only Christmas morning. A changed character, Scrooge becomes a merry old gent with a twinkle in his eye, dispensing money and mirth with equal liberality.

Theme: The individual is personally responsible for fighting social wrongs. It is not enough to pay taxes and hope that a new Law and Order bill will send the troublesome poor to prison.

Christmas Day is a gesture of hope; for one day of the year, family and friends come together and eat, drink and dance to demonstrate how enjoyable life can be. Sensuality and spirituality need not be perpetual antagonists.

Style: A unique combination of ghost story, fairy tale, allegory and bitter social commentary yoked together by the poetry of the grotesque: Marley's ghastly face glows "like a bad lobster in a dark cellar"; Mrs Fezziwig's calves, when dancing, "shone like minnows".

Chief strengths: This book is a masterpiece of compression. In a few lines Scrooge is established as a monster who dares to articulate the repressed spitefulness of Everyman: "every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his breast." The sentiments may be repulsive, but Scrooge's pungent humour is attractive.

Chief weakness: Dickens tries too hard to squeeze the tear-drops; it takes a strong constitution to stomach Tiny Tim.

What they thought of it then: 6,000 copies were sold in a trice and it was described as a "national institution"; on the strength of one reading, Carlyle nipped out and bought a turkey.

What we think of it now: Much read but largely underrated. The weirdness of the story is usually forgotten, displaced by accusations of sentimentality. In fact, Dickens holds the unique mixture in magical suspension.

Responsible for: Numerous adaptations, including Disney's version where Donald Duck plays Scrooge, Mickey Mouse, Cratchit. This tumbling together of Victorian and contemporary cultural icons should excite the Barthes division of the postmodernist brigade.

The magical age of knights and dragons

Jan Morris salutes her fellow Welsh patriot, the medieval rebel, Owain Glyn Dwr

The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr by R.R.Davies, Oxford, £20

In 1951, Oxford University Press published a book about the 14th-century Welsh rebel Owain Glyn Dwr which has remained the classic work on the subject to this day. Its author was Professor J.E.Lloyd, the most eminent Welsh historian of the time, who was impelled in his work, so the D.N.B. tells us, by "a robust national feeling". The book was 181 pages long, was printed in generous type on half-paper, and was instinct with old-school Welsh pride, plus perhaps a touch of the grand – if sometimes windy – enthusiasm that we like to call *hwyd*. Glyn Dwr, said its concluding line, "may with propriety be called the father of modern Welsh nationalism", and Professor Lloyd's book has been beloved of Welsh patriots ever since.

Sixty-four years later, here comes Oxford with its successor at last, written by the Chichele Professor of Medieval History at All Souls. What a difference! Professor Davies's work is more than twice as long and in a type-face half the size. It is empowered by all the resources of modern scholarship, and is testimony to the transformation that has overcome Welsh historiography in the past half-century. No robust national bias here. This is history at its most professional, thorough and disinterested.

Davies, who was until recently Professor of Modern History at Aberystwyth, has already written famously about the Wales of Glyn Dwr's time, but he admits that like Lloyd before him he has discovered no new evidence about the rebel as a man. In particular, it remains an enigma where and how, if at all, Glyn Dwr died, after the decade of his rebellion against English rule. But what this book does is to set the familiar story in an altogether new richness of

context, placing medieval Wales itself in its proper relationship with England and with Europe. Davies's range of knowledge and reference is astonishing, his detailed examples (life in Kidwelly, the most eminent Welsh historian of the time, who was impelled in his work, so the D.N.B. tells us, by "a robust national feeling").

The book opens imaginatively with two fanciful journeys through 14th-century Wales. The first is made by an official of the King's administration, passing from one outpost of the English Establishment to another, mostly on the coast; the second is made by a professional Welsh poet moving among the semi-private, half-parallel society of the indigenous Welsh, mostly in the backcountry. So different are their two excursions, passing among such alien societies, that they might almost be happening in separate countries, yet their routes never diverge by many miles; and this juxtaposition of conqueror and conquered, sometimes overlapping, sometimes just rubbing along, sometimes resentful, sometimes actually hostile, is the key to the whole story.

Glyn Dwr himself was English-educated, and had fought for the King of England against the Scots. Many Welsh leaders opposed him. He had English allies and lieutenants. Yet by the time his rebellion petered out, it was generally recognized as being a war between the Welsh and the English. Glyn Dwr had succeeded in coalescing the disoriented conglomeration of traditional loyalties that was Welsh Wales into something like a true sovereignty. Relations between the two peoples had been shattered, severe racial laws had been introduced in reprisal by the Eng-

lish, and it might well be said, though Professor Davies doesn't, that things in Wales were never to be the same again.

Davies tells us clearly how all this came about – the combination of conspiratorial politics, dynastic pretensions, vatic mysticism, guerrilla skill, nationalist vision and undoubtedly personal charisma which enabled Glyn Dwr to establish such an ascendancy over his volatile compatriots and to polarize their emotions. We learn about his lofty aims – national self-rule, of course, national universities, ecclesiastical autonomy. We hear about all the skimplescambles stuff that Shakespeare's Hotspur mocked, immemorial prophecies, portentous folk-lore, dragons and moldwarps too. And there is a splendid epilogue in which Professor Davies pulls it all together, the legacy of the fighting, the effects of the rising upon the subsequent history of Wales, Glyn Dwr's elevation into mythical status and his recreation as a nationalist champion.

It is not revisionary or debunking history, but it is a world away from Lloyd's little book of long ago. It is a wonderfully learned and enlightened survey of one corner of Europe at a particularly significant moment of its history. But as a Welshman himself – and from Glyn Dwr's own part of the country, too – Professor Rees will forgive me, I know, if I say that his superb book can never quite replace its predecessor of 1951. It is like a paradigm of Wales itself. What has been gained in knowledge, reason and technique has somehow been lost in magic. There was more *hwyd* in the very type-face of the Thirties, and if scholars and researchers from now on will inevitably turn to Davies, old-fashioned patriots like me will still be rereading Lloyd in our baths.



Move over, Sister Wendy. The Rt Rev Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, has his sights on ousting you as the nation's favourite religious aesthete. But don't worry, his "Devotional reflections on the Christmas story in art" (*A Gallery of Reflections: The Nativity of Christ*, Lion, £9.99) are sadly pedestrian. Botticelli's Mystic Nativity makes him regret the Church's lack of enthusiasm for liturgical dance (can we expect to see jiving in the aisles of Christ Church Cathedral?). A pair of midwives in a Russian icon lead him to the view that "We need to

maximize what we spend on education, provision of every kind." Luckily, the pictures are able to speak for themselves. In this serene and contemplative Visitation by the 15th-century German painter Hans Baldung the Elder (above) the Virgin, pregnant with John the Baptist, meets St Elizabeth, pregnant with Jesus. A relatively rare subject in art, the Visitation has inspired some comic-strip absurdities, with the unborn babies having sweethearts at one another from their mothers' womb, but this version has an amiable humanity and grace.

Ambridge amours

An 'Archers' addict confesses. By Sue Gaisford

Shula's Story by Joanna Toye, BBC Books, £9.99

What do Pedro from Spain, Nick Wearing and Charles Hodgeson have in common? No idea? How about Robin Catchpole, Martin Lambert and Bill Morrison? Getting warmer? Try Neil Carter, Nigel Pargetter, Simon Pemberton and Mark Hebdon. If you have ever listened to Radio 4's best-loved and longest-running soap, you must be there by now. Yes, they have all been in love with Shula. *Shula is the golden girl of The Archers*, victim of a thousand disasters, whose lambent beauty and indomitable courage have enslaved these men, and millions of enraptured listeners, through a good 20 years of devotion.

Such a heroine deserves special attention and now she has acquired her own book. It is extraordinary. You can't call it a novel, though it is undoubtedly fiction. Nor is it strictly biography – if anything, it is really a kind of historical romance, firmly based on life in Ambridge, but decorated with visual details.

You could certainly agree with the clothes in which Joanna Toye dresses the cast. It is highly likely that the elegant Caroline Bonne, when confronted with the prospect of having to accompany Shula into labour, would cast about for some Jasper Conran splash-proof co-ordinates to slip into. And of course Jennifer Aldridge, the rich farmer's wife with literary pretensions, would wear a silk scarf with her Puffa jacket. But would Jennifer really offer her distraught daughter some Florentines "still warm from the oven"? Come along, if they were really warm, the chocolate would be runny. Even Jennifer should know that. Still, Toye hits a fine authentic note with her description of the ghastly Bunty Hebdon's lounge, with its matching salmon-pink soft furnishings and its gas log-effect fire.

When you read this kind of thing, you catch yourself wondering if she made it up or did Shula herself describe the room, in a rare bitchy moment that you might have missed on air. An invaluable companion to Toye's book is *The Book of the Archers* (Michael Joseph, £9.99), written by three of its longest serving

actors, which offers encyclopaedic information about its 44 years of existence. As Toye describes the night when Shula, amazingly, lost her virginity to creepy Simon Parker in a Netherbourne cornfield, a glance at this Bible will immediately inform you that yes, it really did happen, back in 1977. Shula, now a dewy combination of Doris Day and Delia Smith, was once a right little goer. My goodness, she even kissed Tim Beecham. She even smoked. But that was all long ago. Nearly half Toye's book is taken up with the recent problems of Shula's fertility. Here you can re-live the agony of her ectopic pregnancy, her decision to try for IVF treatment, its initial failure and subsequent success, with added lurid details about her – hang on a moment while I spell this – hysterical alpinograms. You can suffer again through the terrible night of her husband's sudden death, though you can also remember what an almighty bore he was, despite the fact that he read the *Independent*. In this chapter, you are irresistibly reminded of the stupendous acting of Judy Bennett that had millions of us weeping in cars and kitchens at his loss.

And, reader, I'm ashamed to say that I wept again, though whether my tears sprang from the memory of that performance or from the skill of Joanna Toye in retelling the story, it is impossible to say. And here's the problem with reviewing such a book. Faithful listeners will sigh at the suppression of vast chunks of plot, and quibble over details. We may pine for a glimpse of the permanently plastered Pargetters or of lush Lilian, but we are grateful for the chance to wallow again in all the drama of the life of Ambridge's resident saint. Anyone who had never heard of the place – if such a person exists – might well enjoy it as a slightly implausible novel, but he would miss so much. Only a hardened addict could appreciate the fact that the magnificently frightful Lynda Snell is mentioned only once, and that is as a fragment of Shula's nightmares.

Paperbacks

Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt and Christopher Hirst



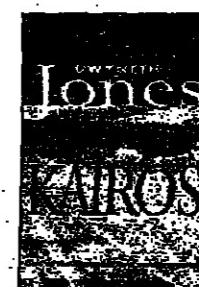
Clapton by Christopher Sandford (Gollancz, £5.99)

A revealing biography of the adept businessman who has built up a vast middle-of-the-road audience. Clapton emerges as unpleasantly fond of swearing drink in 1987. He has shown staying power in the face of tragedy, but remains elusive. A lasting relationship seems beyond him – though he's not short of high-glam pals: Pfeiffer, Helvin, Kensit and, inevitably, Princess Diana.



The Golden Warrior by Lawrence James (Abacus, £9.99)

This lucid portrait of the TE Lawrence probes the shimmering myth which he and others fabricated. Obsessed by chivalry since childhood, he was a brave, if ruthless, soldier. More conventional (and eight inches shorter) than his filmic image, he remains profoundly odd. James dismisses his allegations of sexual abuse by the Turks as an invention of his "Uranian muse".



Kairos by Gwyneth Jones (Gollancz, £5.99)

This early work by a now-established sci-fi writer recalls Michael Moorcock and Angela Carter. Set in a freezing August in the near future (the book predates global warming), Otto (female) and Luci (male) roam a nightmare landscape, pursued by killer angels. "Don't touch me, I'm made of plutonium," one character remarks, which is hard to beat as a conversation stopper.



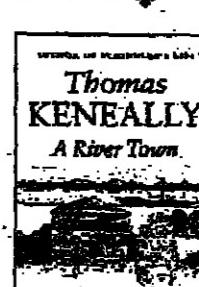
Being Human by Mary and John Gribben (Phoenix, £6.99)

In the middle of the Oligocene, when beavers were as big as bears and stags as tall as houses, human beings were no more than a sparkle in a hairy primate's eye. Mary and John Gribben's sociobiological explanation of life on earth decodes such mysteries as why humans cry salty tears, glaciers melt and six per cent of us are born with tails.



The Penguin Book of Infidelities ed. Stephen Brook (£8.99)

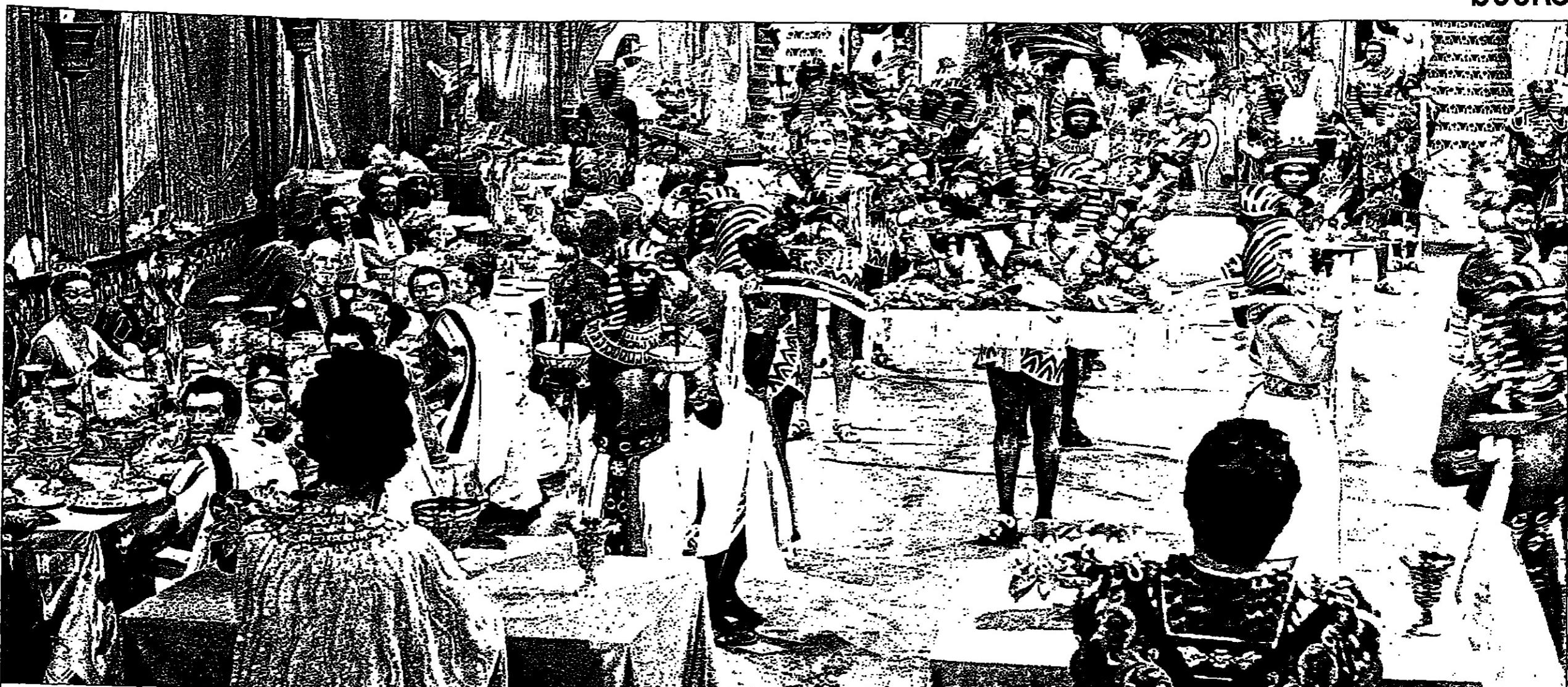
"My God, I'm doing it with Madame Bovary!" Kuglemass whispered to himself. "Me, who failed freshman English." Projected into his favourite novel, the hero of Woody Allen's most famous short story gets to meet literature's best known adulteress face to face. This exuberant anthology offers little to comfort the cuckold.



A River Town by Thomas Keneally (Sceptre, £5.99)

The author of *Schindler's Ark* has a nose for the primitive. His latest novel tells the story of small-town Australia at the turn of the century: a place where little girls have "hardened hands", pigs feed off corpses, and murder-victims' heads are pickled in jars. A beautifully written novel about an Irish immigrant who learns that the new world isn't much better than the old.

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The word made flesh, fowl and fricassee

As we prepare for the annual ritual of over-eating, Kevin Jackson savours the delicious relationship between literature and food

Tis the season to be gluttonous; and the sacred text which lays down a template for all such indulgence will be familiar not only to every literate Briton but also – such was the peculiar myth-making force of its author's imagination – to millions of those who have not once opened its pages:

There was never such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there was ever such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed as Mrs Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish) they hadn't ate it all at last! ...

One must have a palate of stone to read about the Cratches' holiday feast, or any other huge feed in Dickens's fiction, without feeling the early prickles of saliva. (Dickens is surely the world's leading Foodie novelist: you can scarcely flick through 10 consecutive pages without bumping into a steaming veal pie, succulent oysters, slabs of beefsteak, wedding cake, mulled wine or – curious fellow that he was – threatened cannibalism.) Such scenes are magnificent folklore, and yet some readers would hesitate to admit that they are great literature, partly because *A Christmas Carol* is condescendingly regarded as Dickens Lite, partly because earnest readers seem to feel that snacks are beneath the dignity of serious writers.

"We are ambivalent", wrote the American critic Lionel Trilling, "in our conception of the moral status of eating and drinking", and though many of our most intense experiences can be conveyed in images of food and drink, we start to get queasy if writers spend too much time hanging round the kitchen; it's simply not genteel.

For example, a couple of decades ago, Gore Vidal wrote a gloriously pungent review of the 10 novels then on the *New York Times* bestseller list, noting the common rube-tickling elements that had earned them their place at the top of the heap: the Mirror Scene (young heroine gazes into looking-glass and likes what she sees), the Nubile Scene (as above, but with more prominent nipples), the Confrontation With Mr Big Scene... and, inevitably, the Food Scene. "Miss Holt", Vidal observes of one successful authoress, "knows her readers like a good din from time to time along with romance."

One smirks at Mr Vidal's dig, but its snobbery leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. As the case of Dickens shows, pulp novels aren't the only kind of books designed for drooling over: the form of writing Vidal waggishly refers to as "Quality Lit." has seldom been any less keen to lay on a good spread for readers than the pulp stuff. In fact Thackeray, a bestselling writer of his day now safely established as Quality Lit., wrote that "Next to eating good dinners, a healthy man with a benevolent turn of mind must like, I think, to read about them".

True to his principle, Thackeray treated his customers to the splendid "white dinner" of *Pendennis* ("potage à la blanche concocted with the most fragrant cream and almonds... a dish of opal-coloured plover's eggs, which I called Nid de tereuteaux à la Roucoule... and a jelly of marasquin, bland, insinuating, intonating as the glance of beauty") and Becky Sharp's first disastrous encounter with a blisteringly hot curry in *Vanity Fair* – a scene, incidentally, which has its modern-day counterparts in Keith Taintor's self-licentious Indian meal in *Martin Amis's London Fields* and in Les Murray's moving (aficionados of spicy curry will know just how moving) poem about his close encounter with a rogue Vindaloo in South Wales. Nor is it just the robust British novelists who are conspicuously fond of their grub. You can find feasting in Flaubert ("whole sheep cooked in sweet wine, camel and buffaloes' haunches, hedgehogs in garum sauce, fried grasshoppers and pickled doormice..."); Salammbo) and in Proust; in Homer (Fielding in *Tom Jones*, calls the *Odysssey* "That eating poem") and in Rimbaud.

This is a five-star lineage, and it is only a taster. Why, then, has the notion that food is a rather low subject for literature proved so tenacious? The art historian E.H. Gombrich gave one good answer: because the Platonic, "spiritual" senses of the eye and ear have traditionally enjoyed far higher prestige than the supposedly grosser ones of tongue and nose. The literary critic Christopher Ricks gave another, in his inspired discussion of Keats's "The Eve of St Agnes" in *Keats and Embarrassment*. Among the suggestions Ricks brings into play are anthropological writings about tribes who try to hide their acts of ingestion from public gaze as Westerners hide their acts of copulation.

Eating is our earliest sensual pleasure. If as adults we feel a bit ashamed of being seen to like our food too much, it's because we fear we may be slipping back into childish things.

Moreover, reading about eating is one of our earliest literary pleasures. (And we learn to read aloud before we learn to read silently: literature is originally an oral gratification.) Between "once upon a time" and "happily ever after", we want to know what's for supper. Hence all the chocolate factories and tuck shops and midnight feasts in children's books: hence the amiable bears with their porridge; hence all the picnic baskets, of which one – Rat's, from *The Wind in the Willows* – may stand in its unpunctuated, groaning splendour for all the others:

"What's inside it?" asked the Mole, wriggling with curiosity.

"There's cold chicken inside it", replied the Rat briefly, "cold tongue, cold ham, cold beef, pickled gherkin, salted French rolls, cross-sandwiches, spotted meat, ginger beer, lemonade, water..."

"O stop stop," cried the Mole in consternation: "this is too much!"

Mole is an acute critic: it is just this greedy child quality of gorging on "too much" that delights some readers and disconcerts others when offered a good verbal tuck-in. As Ricks points out, Keats was sneered at from all sides for his sweet poetic tooth: "Keats is a miser-

able creature, hungering after sweets which he can't get", Carlyle groused, while Leigh Hunt's nickname for John Keats was "Junkets". The jibes had a point. Any bright GCSE candidate can tell you all about the transferred eroticism of Keats's goodies:

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd.
While he from forth the closet brought a
heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and
gourd
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tint with cinnamon...

One of the many things which is extraordinary about Keats's poetry is its ability to convey an unabashed, Mole-ish ecstasy about luxuriant edibles. This is rare. For the most part, whenever a writer starts dwelling on outlandish fare in unfeasibly large quantities, it's a fair bet he's a satirist: Juvenal, for example, or Petronius in the *Satyricon*, boggling at "a Dish of cramm'd Fowl and the hinder Paps of a Sow that had farrowed but a day before, well Powdered, and in the middle a Hare, stuck in with Finns of Fish in his side, that he looked like a Flying Horse..."

Such grisly fare rapidly states, though: the best modern fiction about food, high and low, has the capacity to combine revulsion and delight into a single course, often by means of comedy. At the one end of the menu, Mr Bloom's fried kidney from Joyce's *Ulysses* or Belacqua's carbonised sandwich from *More Pucks Than Kicks*; at the other, the gleeful, highly seductive gourmandising of Charlie Mordacai in Kyril Bonfiglio's *Mordacai Trilogy*.

Toothsome as all these modern writers are, there is one quality they tend to be less deft at conveying than the writers of earlier times: the sense that one virtue which can redeem hearty group eating from mere gluttony is the chance it affords to give and accept hospitality, to use the mouth for good talking as well as vigorous mastication. No poem in the English language captures the civilisation or the civility of eating quite so engagingly as Ben Jonson's lines inviting a friend to supper:

Yet shall you have, to rectify your palate
An onion, capers, or some better salade
Ushring the mutton; with a short-leg'd hen
If we can get her, full of eggs, and then.
Limons, and wine for sauce; to these, a coney
Is not to be despair'd of, for our money:
And, though fowle, now, be scarce, yet there
are clarkes.
The skic not falling, think we may have larkes...

And what larks. Bon appetit.



"Soother than the creamy curd": the guests at Trimalchio's feast tickle their jaded palates (above) in Fellini's *Satyricon* and (top) sybaritic eating from *Cleopatra*. Pictures: Ronald Grant Archive

Plum pudding in the melting pot

From Santa Claus to 'Away in the Manger', many of our best loved Christmas traditions are American imports, according to a new cultural history. By Christina Hardymont

Don't be put off by the limited sphere of reference implied by the title of this seasonal but far from trivial offering. Penne Restad's account of how Christmas came of age in America is both informative and illuminating, a gem of cultural history. Best of all, Restad offers an intelligent and richly furnished answer to all the Christmas killjoys who shake their heads over modern materialism and secularism.

If anything, she argues, Christmas today is a good deal more civilized and charitable than it ever used to be. Those polite little bands of carol-singers rattling their collecting tins to strains of "The First Nowell" are in fact the last vestiges of the wild and entirely self-indulgent revelers who once roamed the streets banging on doors and letting off guns. For Christmas, season of the Roman Saturnalia and the Norse Yule, was never exclusively religious: far from deserting its true origins by making it a season of party-going, we have maintained them.

In the 19th century, increased prosperity saw Christmas retreating from the streets and becoming concentrated on the family. Nativity became uppermost: the wild German forest festivities were tamed into tiny tabletop trees. Gifts, dismissed by the early puritan settlers as pagan pleasures, became an important expression of communal and familial ties.

"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents" opens Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, that most family-centred of children's classics. It set the agenda for the acceptability of the gift as an expression of love, while at the same time emphasising that it was the giving rather than the gift which matters. Marmie's dutiful daughters give what they have to the deserving poor, but still contrive, through personal sacrifice and effort, to signal their love for each other in small keepsakes. The ultimate gift they themselves receive is the return of their father from war.

Little Women is by no means the only

significant Christmas text we have adopted from America. Restad claims that we owe Santa as we know him today to New Yorker Clement Clarke Moore, who in 1822 dashed off a rollicking ballad, now universally known as "The Night Before Christmas". It could have remained hidden in the family's album, but a visitor copied it out, and the next year it appeared in a New York magazine, the *Troy Sentinel*. From then on, chimneys, reindeer and a rosy-cheeked, portly Santa Claus peeking out of department store grottoes became part of the canon.

Christmas cards and cards may have originated

in Europe, but by the time the Americans had finished with them they, like Santa, had been infinitely embellished. The cultural melting pot of the new nation took an eclectic mixture of Christmas traditions – Dutch, Scandinavian, English, Italian – and rolled them all up together into a new whole, every bit as rich and varied as plum pudding. "Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer", "Jingle Bells" and even "Away in a Manger" all came to us courtesy of the good old U.S. of A.

Occasionally, a xenophobe might feel that Restad overstates her claims. "The North Pole elves were not unlike immigrants working in the nation's sweatshops", we are told. Dickens, she asserts, owed the inspiration of his 1842 *Christmas Carol* to a visit to America. "Prior to then Dickens had shown much interest in the holiday". By the 1890s, "Americans had reinvented Christmas... as a lens through which to envision, as a people, from whence they came and who they had become." But for the most part she succeeds

in establishing a compelling argument for the value of this oldest of all our traditions.

Although the book concentrates on the development of Christmas traditions in the 19th century, her last chapter offers some provocative observations on the effect of mass media and international marketing techniques on the festival. The Christmas Eve promenade to see the city centre *en feu* and choose gifts for one's nearest and dearest has been steadily extended into a four or even six week Nightmare before Christmas.

She concludes, some would say optimistically, that we have driven rather than been dragged towards our present hectic celebrations. For all the commercialization, "we do not give up. Christmas remains the most important holiday on our nation's calendar... It causes us to examine relationships with our families, our community, and our faith. At Christmastide we must, directly or even by omission, set our priorities, establish our tolerances and square our hopes with reality."

country

A working Christmas in Wales

The small Welsh border settlement of Montgomery has been described as a town which time forgot. Founded in 1227, it managed to avoid many of the upheavals of the next seven centuries. It was bypassed by the railways and subsequently by the canals. Today it is only dissected by a winding, mud-spattered road. This isolation has prevented it becoming a haven for commuters and has enabled it to retain its sense of community. Many believe it is one of the last unspoilt towns in



Wales, which may be why a few years ago a BBC crew chose to shoot much of "A Child's Christmas in Wales" here. At first glance, the town seems tranquil, sleepy even. Sheepdogs loll across the cobbles in the quiet main street. Shop doorbells tinkle as elderly women leave laden with bags. But behind Montgomery's sedate appearance is a flurry of activity. For the town's hoteliers, farmers, vets and GPs it is the busiest time of year...

By Matthew Brace



Dr John Wynn-Jones, GP

"I'll be on call this Christmas. I do three Christmases out of every four. I've got about 7,000 patients in the practice area, so things can get quite busy." Every year we have a flu epidemic, so you have to be prepared for that. Christmases have got busier and busier and I think that's connected to the commercialisation of Christmas. People put so much into Christmas now, financially and emotionally, because so much is expected. Buying the best presents, the best trees. I'm not being bitter about this, but all these things can add up to people's stress.

"I do feel that country people seem genuinely upset about calling you out at Christmas. They're always very apologetic. But that's what this town is like. It's human. People feel human living here."

"I think Dylan Thomas would have liked Montgomery. I can just see him holding forth at the bar in the Dragon, making fun of the Welsh. This place is full of characters. One Christmas Day I went down to the surgery and set the alarms off by mistake. The police arrived and I said how sorry I was for troubling them. One policeman said: 'Oh, don't upset yourself doc, as a matter of fact I've got this terrible ear ache, you couldn't look at it for me could you?'

"I'm the rural medical advisor for *The Archers*, so that keeps me busy, too. I remember one of my first Christmases doing this, I had to advise on a storyline about Mike the milkman who was severely depressed after his marriage break-up. Everyone thought that he would commit suicide on Christmas Day, but in the end he didn't. It was quite a big story, that."

Mark Michaels, hotel owner

"It's going to be busy this year. We're fully booked. Christmas and New Year."

"This is always our busiest time of year, and I think it's my favourite as well. Christmas comes to us, you could say. You get to see all Montgomery's wonderful characters in the bay if you're here around Christmas time. Someone once said every place has its village idiot, but Montgomery seems to have six. The bar is very busy most nights with carol singers, local people from the town or those who are just visiting."

"We get people from all over the country – London, Scotland – and a lot of them are return guests. Over this New Year, 80 per cent of them will have been here before. We are usually the last stop for people on New Year's Eve, because then they go outside and link arms around the Town Hall for Auld Lang Syne at midnight."

"We have to plan Christmas Day quite carefully. My wife and I and our two daughters have breakfast first, then the guests, then it's time to open our presents, then on with the lunch... It's quite hectic and it's very much a full working day. We've got to make sure the staff get off early to go and have their Christmases too."

"My wife and I are both from London originally, so Montgomery was quite different at first, especially at this time of year. Much more relaxed. It's a very special place. It's slower in the caring sense, in that we've got time for other people, but it's not slower in a boxing rural sense."

Ted Edwards tends his flock, left: 'On Christmas morning the milk tanker man wants to get home for his lunch, so he comes even earlier than usual'. Top: Montgomery, used as the model for the BBC's 'Child's Christmas in Wales'. Photographs: John Potter/Newsteam (top) and Matthew Brace

Frances Butler, vet

"Christmas varies when you're working – sometimes it's really quiet, other times you can be rushing around. When I work over Christmas I stay by the phones to take the calls. You can be out in the car for most of the day."

"We can get a lot of sick dogs over Christmas because they've been eating the chocolates off the tree. There's a chemical in some chocolate that can kill them. I've had to put dogs down over Christmas, which is not very nice. But generally there tends to be more common sense in the countryside about pets than you might find in the big towns."

"One of the worst things about working at Christmas for me is that I can't do my carol singing. I sing alto in the church choir, but it makes it a bit difficult getting to rehearsals and services when you're on duty. The rector's very good though. I brought my mobile phone in to church once. I felt really bad sitting there in my pew with it, but it only went off once."

"I remember my first Christmas here. I'm not one for going into pubs on my own, but here I was made to feel really welcome. Christmas is like that here. For a lot of people, especially those who don't get out much, it might be the only time they see a lot of their friends in a year. I'm sure a lot of odd things go on around here at Christmas as well, but it's the men who'll know about them, the naughty stories. There's a certain aspect of rural courtesy here which means that women don't get told the more risky stories."

Ted Edwards, dairy farmer

"We're usually up and milking by 5am on Christmas morning. We've got a dairy farm here, a 56-acre smallholding, and we've been here 20 years, so we're used to getting up early in the morning."

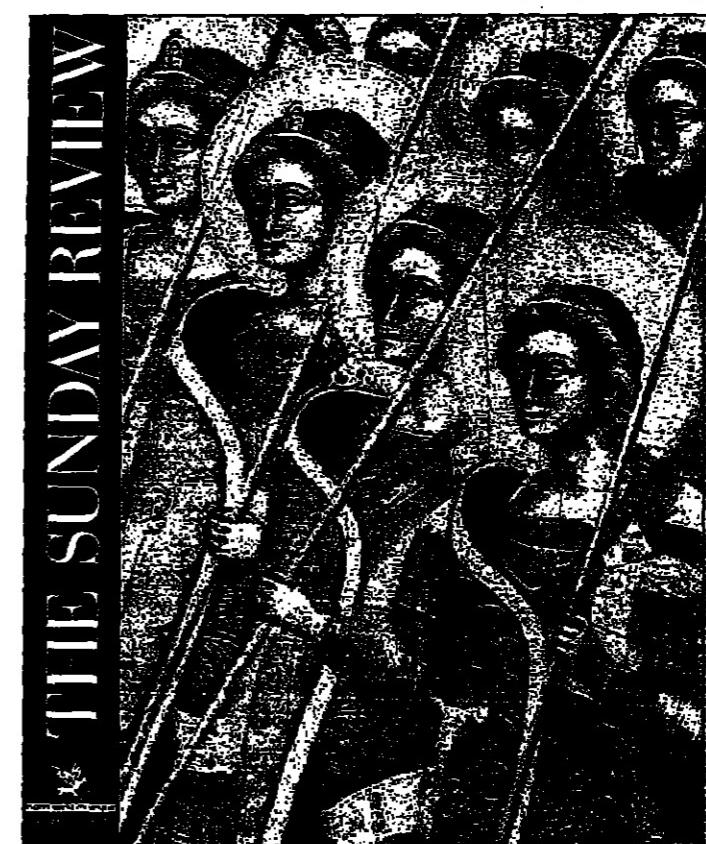
"Usually the milk tanker comes at about 5am, but on Christmas morning the tanker driver wants to get home for his lunch, so he comes even earlier. That early start means you have to take it a bit easy on Christmas Eve and get to bed at a good time."

"One Christmas it was so icy we had trouble getting the tanker up the drive. Took us three-quarters of an hour because it was slipping and sliding so much. We could have stayed in bed. Christmas is a special time for me. We go to our Chapel on Christmas morning after the first milking and then come back for lunch. My son and daughter come home, which is nice. It's always been a family day – I wouldn't want it any different. I've never wanted to go away for Christmas. Wouldn't seem right."

"Montgomery is like that, a family place with an atmosphere of togetherness. You've got your rogues, like any place but mainly it's a good town – the odd poacher."

"One year we had a calf born here on the farm on Christmas Day. It was quite a surprise, but it brought the Christmas message closer to home. It was a Christmas present I suppose."

"I miss the Christmases I had when I was young. We would do all our own plucking and feathering and take in birds from our neighbours. There was so many feathers floating about, you had to strain your cups of tea so you didn't get down in your mouth."



See! the angelic host proclaim... some 72 per cent of Americans claim to have had close encounters with angels; the British are scarcely less credulous. Justine Picardie on the boom industry of the Nineties

Plus: 'Hermitage' – a new short story by Julian Barnes

And full TV and radio listings for the Christmas holiday

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Billy built a circular summerhouse, which became known as Gran's cage, and in this the old lady sat with her knitting while Tara prowled free outside

At Tiger Haven, on the border of India and Nepal, they will be celebrating Christmas much as we are. Billy Arjan Singh – big cat specialist extraordinary – is a bachelor, but his tribe has gathered at his white house on the edge of the jungle, and because the family has English connections, proceedings strike a strongly western note.

A blazing log fire in the sitting room will banish the chill of the Indian winter: a tree will be decorated, and Father Christmas, in full regalia, and fortified by a peg or two of whisky, will distribute presents to the children after carols and supper. One notable absentee will be the traditional dish of roast peacock, for the birds are now protected – and perhaps it is just as well that goose will fill the bill, because Billy's tame peacock Tom Dooley, which struts about outside, might take a dim view of any reversion to barbaric customs.

My thoughts were sent winging to Tiger Haven by a television programme about



DUFF HART-DAVIS

apes and that done by Arjan Singh with Tara, a tigress, during the 1970s. At a time when India's stock of tigers had sunk to its lowest ebb, Billy imported a cub from England and brought it up in and around his house, determined to prove that when the animal grew to maturity, its inbred instincts would assert themselves, and it would take to the jungle.

Before that happened, certain problems presented themselves. One was that Billy's mother became scared of this immense cat, which soon weighed 300lbs. To calm her nerves, Billy built her a circular summerhouse thatched with straw, which became known as Gran's Cage, and in this the old lady sat with her knitting, while Tara prowled free outside.

In time Billy's predictions were proved triumphantly right. At the age of three, Tara vanished into the forest, never returned, and during a full life bore four litters of cubs to wild males. Yet the

experiment made Billy many enemies. Hidebound conservationists accused him of polluting the local strain of Bengal tiger with a "genetic cocktail" – to which he replied that he could imagine nothing better than the infusion of vigorous new genes. He was much excited by the recent appearance of a tiger with distinctly Siberian markings, and it now seems that Tara may have carried echoes of that sub-species in her make-up.

A more sinister accusation was that she had turned man-eater. During the 1970s and 1980s an outbreak of man-eating spread through the district, Kheri. More than 100 humans were killed. Again and again people said, "It's that bloody tiger of yours. Because it was brought up with humans, it has no fear of them."

Being a volunteer wildlife warden, Billy was repeatedly called out to shoot tigers summarily convicted of murder. Always he went with a heavy heart, dreading that the culprit might be Tara. It never

was, and she lived on to the age of 14 before – so far as he knew – dying a natural death.

But the moral of the story is exactly that of the gorillas. No matter how much ingenuity, money and love a man may spend in attempts at reintroduction, the real villain is the human race and its insatiable demand for land.

In India, as in Africa, the ultimate problem for wildlife is not poaching, but shortage of space. The man-eating broke out in Kheri because humans infiltrated the reserves officially set aside for tigers. In Africa the gorilla's habitat is similarly being eaten away. So if Billy Arjan Singh should hear the deep *Adum*! of a tiger boom coming from behind the house on Christmas morning, it will be a present more precious than anything the Magi could have brought him.

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

A place on Millionaires' Row

Anne Spackman on the top 10 house sales of the year

For the third year running, entry to the top 10 British house sales of the year requires a minimum down-payment of £4m. More than 50 sales at over £1.5m have taken place in London alone this year, but most are eclipsed by a handful of exceptional houses and estates bought by some of the richest people in the world.

The pinnacle of the British property market bears as much resemblance to the mainstream market as Concord's to a Trabant. It only takes a dozen bankers at Goldman Sachs to earn million pound bonuses for there to be 12 new customers bidding for the country's finest houses. Over the past three years there have been plenty of them about – and many more in the pipeline for 1996.

If the property market is anything to go by, London is now firmly established as one of the big three financial cities of the world, along with New York and Tokyo. Agents handling houses on the Phillimore Estate in Kensington – one of the City's preferred zones – say prices have risen by 50 per cent over the last three years. Prices in the best parts of London have generally risen 20-30 per cent over the period. It is bankers and businessmen, rather than lottery winners, who are driving them up.

The top 10 sales lists are always comprised of London houses and large country estates. This year, as last, the capital dominates. This is partly because land prices are currently soaring like house prices did in the late Eighties. Farmers, particularly of the gentleman-landowner variety, have never had it so good. They are buying land rather than selling. When the very good stuff does hit the market, the price achieved is what estate agents term "very full".

Last year saw a series of record-breaking sales of new ambassadorial residences around Regent's Park. This year it is the family houses of Chelsea, Holland Park and Kensington which have most consistently rung up the multi-million pound receipts.

Property Vision, the buying agents who acted for two of the property purchasers in this list, believe that pattern is set to continue. The company says the richest people will continue to flock to west London or the M40/M4/M3 belt west of the capital. For properties of the right calibre in the right place the competition can only get hotter. Meanwhile here is our list of the top 10 properties for sale in 1995...

1. The Old Rectory, Old Church Street, Chelsea

This spectacular speculative development was sold in February by Knight Frank & Rutley for around £22m to a Greek family for use as their principal residence. They are said to be spending the same amount again on furniture and decorations. Once an ordinary rectory, the house was extended into an ambassadorial home by the fashionable Toyoko Metropolitan Company, who completed three such ventures last year. The house has two vast entertaining rooms, 10 bedroom suites, an indoor swimming pool lined with black marble and a safe the size of the average living room. Though it is just off King's Road it has an amazing two acres of gardens, including a tennis court and summer house.

2. The Laverstoke Estate, Hampshire

This 3,000-acre slice of finest England is believed to be under offer with a price-tag of £10m. It has all the prerequisites of a fine country estate: a beautiful parkland setting, a lake, fishing on the River Test, a pheasant and partridge shoot, not to mention the vast Georgian house itself where the library is bigger than the ballroom. The Laverstoke Estate is being sold by Savills for De La Rue, who acquired it through a business takeover. Savills refuse to comment on the deal.

3. Number 18 Holland Park, London

Holland Park has been on this list three years running and features twice in 1995. It has become the place for large, well-arranged, freehold family houses. Number 18 is a classic double-fronted white stucco villa with an addi-

tional mews house. A sale was agreed with the owner from Singapore at a staggering £8m, but a gazump came along, forcing the eventual price up to £8.3m. The happy agents were John D Wood.

4. The Salperton Estate in Gloucestershire

It took a long time to find a buyer for the Cotswold estate that was owned by the businessman Victor Watkins. Its main attractions are 1,700 acres with pheasant and partridge shoot and 33 cottages, as well as the 18th-century manor house. Savills eventually sold it for around £8m to another businessman, self-made millionaire Barry Houghton, who made his money in the telecommunications business.

5. Chesham Place, Belgravia, London

One family paid just over £7m for two neighbouring houses and a flat to live in while the houses were being knocked into one. They are officially mews houses, but have grand reception rooms and gardens on a par with the townhouses in the neighbourhood. They were sold by Knight Frank & Rutley.

6. Beaufort Castle, Scotland

Number one on the list of most romantic sales of the year. This ancestral seat of the Frasers of Lovat, situated on the banks of the Beauly Firth near Inverness, was bought in August by Ann Gloag, the bus driver's daughter who founded the Stagecoach transport empire. Brought up in a council house in Perth, she is now the owner of a 24-bedroom Highland castle and 800 acres. Ann Gloag paid about £2m for her slice of the estate and the rest of the 19,000 acres was sold for £4m in 17 separate lots by Finlayson Hughes and Knight Frank & Rutley.

7. Number 24 Rutland Gate, Kensington, London

Number 24 was the Accademia Italiana, a 40 room mansion with five inter-communicating reception rooms and 14,000 sq ft of living space. It was sold for more than £5m by Savills and Knight Frank & Rutley to a private buyer who is converting it into a family house.

8. Osborne House, Chelsea, London

This was a very English sale. Osborne House is a genuine Georgian property with lovely gardens of one third of an acre, some six bedrooms and off-street parking for five cars. It is the kind of house more commonly found in Gloucestershire than Chelsea. It was sold in the summer by Chesterfield and Knight Frank & Rutley for around £5m to an English purchaser.

9. Number 10 Holland Park, London

Another period, double-fronted house whose symmetry was destroyed by a garage on the lower ground floor. The new owners are expected to change that arrangement while stripping out the rest of the house – currently divided into a maisonette and two large flats. It was sold last week by John D Wood for just under £5m.

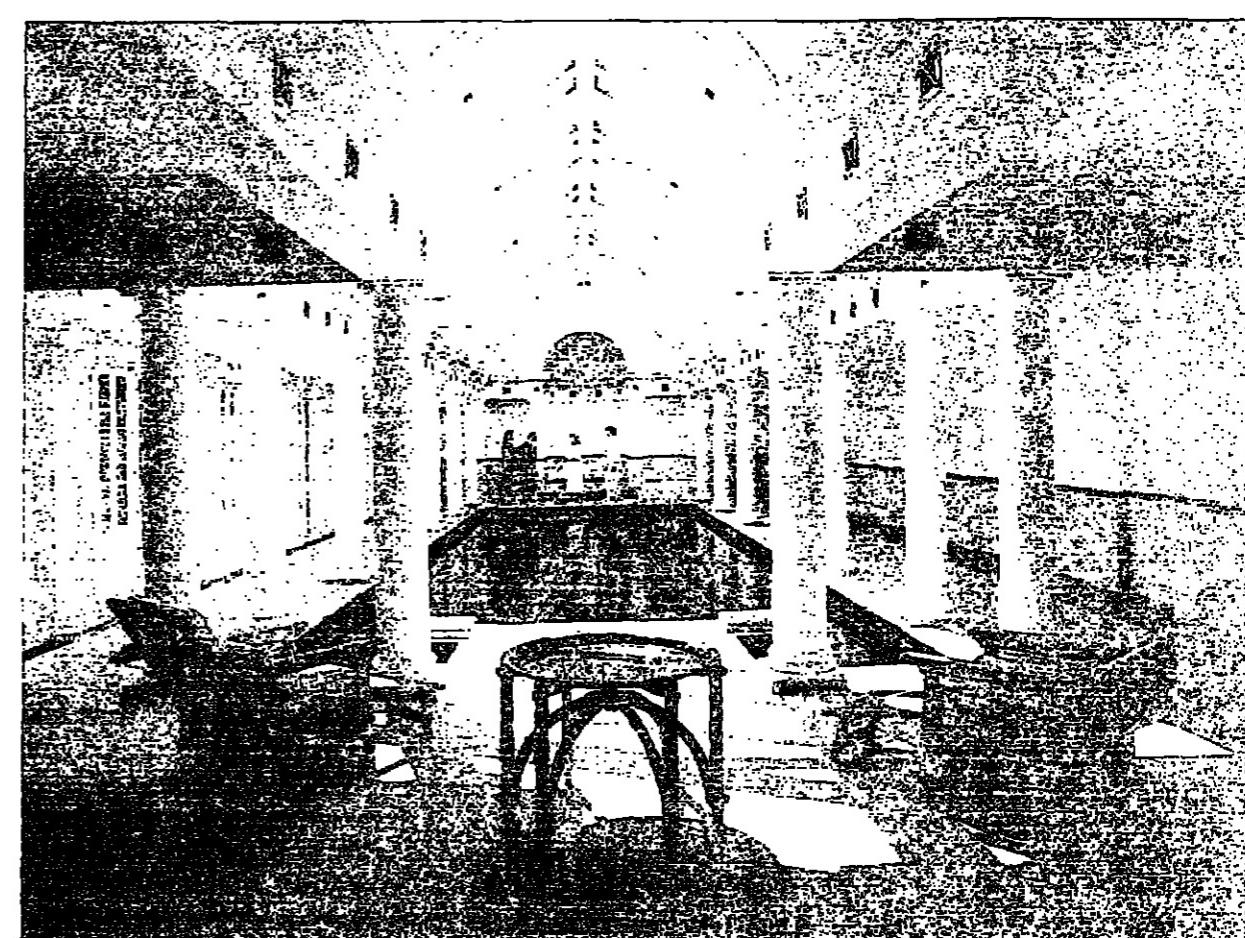
10. Number 3a Kensington Palace Green, Kensington, London

This is the penthouse flat in the Regaline block that became synonymous with the property crash. It has featured on this list three times in three years, changing hands more like a batch of shares than a home. This time the price was £4.5m through Knight Frank & Rutley.

And finally...

a top garage sale:

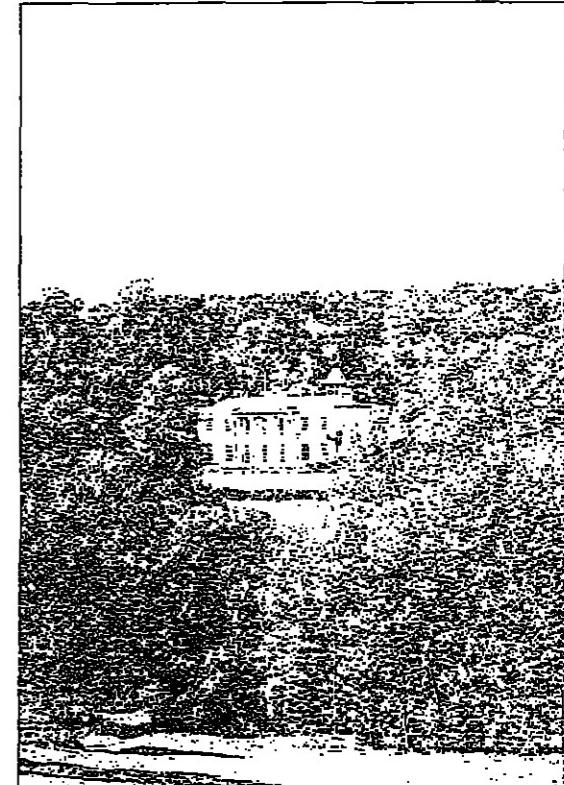
Ivana Irupi's husband Riccardo Mazzucelli paid £100,000 for a garage in Shafto Mews, Knightsbridge, London, near his home in Cadogan Square. The garage is large enough to house his gold Rolls-Royce convertible, which cost nearly twice as much. With parking spaces at such a premium it now costs the same to buy a single garage in central London as a three-bedroom semi-detached house in Barnes.



The Old Rectory, Chelsea Photo: Herbie Knott



Left: Beaufort Castle in Scotland. In August the castle plus 800 acres sold for £2m, the rest of the 19,000 acres went for £4m. Right: the 3,000-acre Laverstoke Estate, Hampshire, that is believed to be on offer with a price of £10m. The library is said to be even bigger than the ballroom.



Holly may be the last remnant of the natural landscape

Holly has a place, even in a modern garden. By Anna Pavord

The holly and the ivy/When they are both full grown/Of all the trees that are in the wood/Dum dum dum dum." You've probably heard the carol a dozen times already, beamed into shopping malls, programmed into end-of-term nativity plays. The words are quite weird, suggesting the pagan figure of the Green Man lurking at the crib.

Holly, one of this country's rather small collection of native evergreens, carries symbolic baggage along with its berries. It stands for life in the bleak midwinter and, in country areas at least, still commands great respect. Even mechanical hedge cutters are guided carefully round a holly's smooth-skinned trunk. The dark green beacons rise up from lane hedges more often than any other tree.

How many billions of years did it take for holly to design its defence system? You can see why these evergreens need them. As winter strips the landscape bare of leaves, evergreens become magnets for browsers. Few concocted a deadly poison: ivy, in which sheep graze voraciously in winter, got its off the ground and into the air; holly has its prickles.

The clever thing about the holly's prickles is that they work in so many planes. Leaves generally are flat, two-dimensional, like stencils. The holly leaf has a central midrib, like any other leaf, and eight pairs of veins branching out from the midrib in parallel lines to the eight spines on either side of the leaf. But then symmetry is abandoned and every point takes its own line. Some curl back under the leaf, some turn up to the sky, some fill the slanting voids in

between. It means that whichever angle you approach it from, the leaf will jab you. It's strange how each point knows what its neighbour is up to and makes sure to do something different.

Think of the leaf as a rugby forward line, said a botanist friend. If a winger, or next door point, darts off in a certain direction, the rest don't follow, but do what will be best for the team as a whole, covering the gaps.

And yes, I know that a football analogy would be much more fashionable, but being Welsh, I was 22 before I ever saw a football game. It was at Liverpool and they were playing Everton, but the match seemed to have little of the drama of the Newport/ Cardiff rugby jousts on which I had been brought up.

Hollies are underrated, now because they are slow. We live in an impatient age. People move around more than they used to and don't particularly want to plant things that they won't get the benefit of. This is a danger in gardens. It leads to layouts that, like instant takeaway food, are ultimately unsatisfying. The ingredients are limited and, after the initial gratification, there is no longer sense of longer pleasures. A holly can give you that – in spades.

In your garden, you can make a stand against the prevailing mood of the age. The great 18th-century landscape gardens were made at a time when their busy agricultural owners were fencing and hedging and parcelling and enclosing land. Capability Brown's landscapes reminded them of a pastoral past, before turnips, before corn.

If the mood now is instant, disposable, then our gardens should become places where the opposite things are going on. We should be planting slow, steady, sustaining things. In the garden at least, if in no other part of our lives, we can plant a future.

A satisfying garden is a resonant one. That is easier to recognise than to pin down. A resonant garden has things going on in it that are not of the here and now. Built into it are messages from previous owners of the garden and previous uses of the land.

Even after the mammoth building boom of the Eighties, most people live in places that others have lived in before. Even if the house itself is new, the space around it may carry hints of what happened there previously. Huge pear trees in suburban gardens round the outskirts of London remind us of the orchards that used to feed the tenement dwellers of the city. Big old bay trees planted close to houses recall the time when gardeners believed quite literally that "neither witch nor devil, thunder nor lightning will hurt a man in the place where a bay tree is" as the 7th-century herbalist Nicholas Culpeper put it.

The gardener must balance between imposing his own will on a patch and recognising the worth of some things that were going on there before he arrived.

Gardens are like houses. The most interesting rooms are those that are built up from layers of possessions, not of the same age or style, but which all reflect a particular personality. In the same way, you may not have cho-

sen the pear tree at the bottom of the garden, but it is probably not a bad job. You can absorb it by swinging a hammock from its branches or growing a clematis up its trunk.

A holly at the bottom of the garden may be the last remnant of the natural landscape that existed before urbanisation spread over your patch.

That is quite a comforting thought – a thread that connects the before with the after. It need not stop you planting cyclamen close to its trunk and ferns to unfold after the holly's berries have gone.

Some ecological gauchoes insist that only by planting wildernesses can gardeners attain to the ranks of the ecologically blessed. That is hubris. The ecological soundness of gardeners has to do with their methods, not their choice of plants. A so-called "wild" garden is not intrinsically better for the environment than a tended one, though different creatures will thrive in each. The holly though will stand for a little bit of unclaimed territory at the edge of your kingdom and will add immeasurably to the spirit of the place.

Look for *Rexia alata*'s "Silver Sentinel" with grey green leaves edged in cream (female), broad-leaved *Camellia* (female), gold-variegated "Golden King" (female), "Hodginsii" with its irregularly produced spines (male), "Lawsoniana", whose dark green leaves have bright yellow centres (female), compact, dome-shaped "Wilsonii" (female) and *L. aquifolium* 'J.C. van Tol' with large crops of berries (female). Only female trees bear berries but there must be a male tree in the vicinity to pollinate them.

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travel

Another time, another place

Seasonal stories by five celebrated travellers

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR, 1933, Germany

In the year Hitler came to power Patrick Leigh Fermor walked through Germany on his way to Constantinople. He spent Christmas at Bingen in the Rhineland



The only customer I unslung my rucksack in a little Gasthof. Standing on chairs, the innkeeper's pretty daughter, who were aged from five to 15, were helping their father decorate a Christmas tree; hanging witch balls, looping tinsel, fixing candles to the branches, and crowning the tip with a wonderful star. They asked me to help and when it was almost done, their father, a tall, thoughtful looking man, uncorked a slim bottle from the Rüdesheim vineyard just over the river. We drank it together and had nearly finished a second by the time the last touches to the tree were complete. Then the family assembled round it and sang. The candles were the only light and the solemn and charm-

Ros entsprung": both were entrancing, and especially the second, which, they told me, was very old. In the end I went to church with them and stayed the night. When all the inhabitants of Bingen were exchanging greetings with each other outside the church in the small hours, a few flakes began falling. Next morning the household embraced each other, shook hands again and wished everyone a happy Christmas. The smallest of the daughters gave me a tangerine and a packet of cigarettes wrapped beautifully in tinsel and silver paper. I wished I'd had something to hand her, neatly done up in a holly-patterned ribbon – I thought later of my aluminium pencil case containing a new Venus or Royal Sovereign wound in tissue paper, but too late.

From 'A Time of Gifts' by Patrick Leigh Fermor, © John Murray

LAURIE LEE, 1953, Spain

Laurie Lee lived in Spain during the Civil War. He returned 15 years later and spent the winter travelling through Andalusia, with Christmas in Granada.



controlled by absolute self-confidence and taste.

In the Palace gardens we ate a Christmas lunch of bread and raisins, and then, in the afternoon, followed a great crowd under a threatening sky to see another bull fight. This was a special show designed to celebrate the first day of the Pascua. Six young Granadinos, nominated by their various supporters, had been voted into the ring to fight six young bulls as green in years and mixed in courage as they were.

We climbed to the wide concrete seats high above the arena and shared a cask of wine with a family from Alpujarra. The bull ring was crowded to the sky, the black clouds rolled down from the mountains, the air darkened, and the young *toreros*, in their tight suits, looked waxen and frightened.

The spectacle that now began was in many ways a repetition of the one we had seen in Seville. There was the same drawn intensity on the faces of the boys, the same brush courage alternating with bouts of hysterical panic, the same uneven, confused and often vicious bulls. It was their very youth that made them so dangerous. They came trotting in, their tasseled tails held high, cast puzzled eyes around the crowd, caught sight of some wavering challenge in the ring and charged

or retreated according to their mettle. Then, with as much grace and style as the boy could muster, he would step forward and run the bull close to his body. Often, at this early stage, the bull's innocence made him charge the cape every time, and if the boy was lucky the passes were straight and clean, the bull's rushes shorter and tighter. This, like a successful dribble at football, was what the crowd had come to see, and its effect on them was like a shared orgasm, so that they shouted together "Olé!" in one great voice, a loud excited noise to be heard all over the city.

It was in the later stages of the combat that the boys showed their inexperience, when the bull grew more difficult to handle, when the bars of the *bandilleros* had torn his shoulders and he had grown angry and dismayed. Then he would stand alone in the middle of the ring, bellowing and dripping blood, or would wander miserably into a corner trying to escape. Only the best of bull fighters could make anything of that situation, could lead the bull back into the fight and finish him cleanly. A less assured *torero* – like most of those we saw that afternoon – would run after the retreating bull with a kind of bitter sickness on his face, hating the whole thing, would wave his arms, and shout and caper, and sooner or later, in his frantic misery, get well tossed for his pains.

Everybody got tossed that afternoon, and some several times. There was one poor fellow named Angelito, a blond boy with large ears, who soon lost all control of his bull and was thrown round the ring like a shuttlecock. The crowd was much amused by this, especially our neighbour from Alpujarra, who rolled in the aisles with delight.

From 'A Rose for Winter' by Laurie Lee, © Hogarth Press

P J O'Rourke, 1985, El Salvador

As a foreign correspondent P J O'Rourke found himself in El Salvador over Christmas. He had arrived full of preconceptions



stranger to loud noise. I've been to a Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels concert. I once dated a woman with two kids. But at midnight on Christmas Eve – with the windows shut, the air conditioner on, the TV turned up and the bathroom door closed – I couldn't hear myself sing "Wild Colonial Boy" in the shower. On Christmas Day I saw people raking their yards, gathering mounds of spent grey firecrackers as large as autumn leaf piles.

You'd think after six years of civil war and 464 years of civil unrest, more explosions would be the last thing the Salvadoreans would want. Or, maybe, the thing they want most.

From 'Holidays in Hell' by P J O'Rourke © Picador (£5.99)



The snow-covered Rhineland, where Patrick Leigh Fermor spent Christmas in 1933

Photograph: J Allan Cash

ERIC NEWBY, 1963, India

With his wife Wanda, Eric Newby followed the Ganges from Hardwar to the Bay of Bengal. Christmas was at Kanpur in Orissa



In contrast to the chilliness displayed by our compatriots was Christmas dinner with Mr William, his wife Mary and the rest of the Noronha family. It was preceded by quantities of drink to which we had grown unaccustomed. Afterwards we lay about listlessly among stuffed tigers and other trophies of the chase shot by Mr William who, in spite of advancing years and increasing deafness, was a noted and passionate hunter, ourselves feeling rather like things that had just been returned from the taxidermist.

Later we attempted to telephone our children in England. As a conversation it was not a success. Neither of the parties could hear a word that the other was saying, but the operator at Kanpur who had been roused by our bellows came to our aid and passed on small snippets of information.

"Now they are saying that it is snowing... Now that they are receiving many letters but they are not reading them because they are not able to do so. Please write more distinctly..." and so on.

In the evening we went to the cinema. The film was a gruesome musical comedy set amongst almond blossom in Kashmir. Soon we were fast asleep. It had been a long day.

It had begun at midnight on Christmas

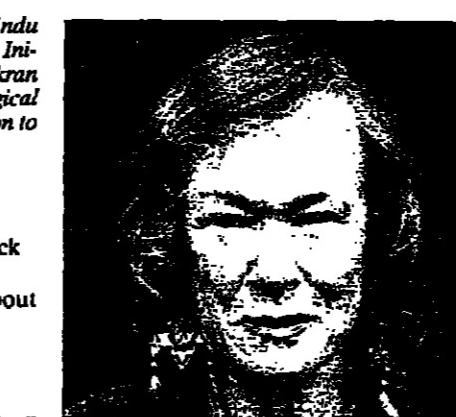
Eve with Mass at the Roman Catholic Church in the Cantonment. When we arrived the service had already been in full blast for half an hour and when we left at one in the morning the congregation, which by this time was asleep on its feet, was still being harangued by the Indian priest who showed no signs of coming to an end of his sermon. Even Wanda was impressed. "They would not stand for that in my country," she said. "Many would not stand at all."

"Why?" I said. "I was not really interested. By this time I was a bit fed up with her church. Everything in it seemed to go on for such a long time, and here both the preliminary addresses and the sermon had been given in Hindi and English."

"They would not be able to. They would be drunk."

SHEILA PAINE, 1990, Pakistan

Sheila Paine travelled through the Hindu Kush in search of an embroidered amulet. Initially denied access to the closed-off Makran territory, she joined an Italian Archeological Mission that had been granted permission to study there over the winter



No chance of any wine, I suppose. JM?"

"Wine? No. No wine. Whisky. Black Dog."

"Not for Christmas. What about cognac?"

"What's that?"

"Brandy."

"Write it down."

I wrote "Cognac Grande Fine Napoléon" and drew a few stars.

JM returned, flushed with success, a newspaper packet under his arm. "Cognac Napoleon. Made in France," the label said and the screw top didn't appear to have been tampered with, though the cognac didn't taste quite right. We had it with almonds the boys had cracked with stones on the verandah of Circuit House.

Rashly I had offered to produce a Christmas dinner and ferreted around the bazaar to see what there was to buy. It wasn't promising. Some fruit and a few vegetables and nuts were available but the

oil, black cherry jam, Elli coffee and some spaghetti they wouldn't part with. Kholiq had procured a packet of Kraft processed cheese. "And" said Sheila "you have to be very careful. Even with the rubbish they have to put up with here these Italians can be very fussy when it comes to something European. They won't eat things like ready-grated Parmesan. You should have heard Ugo. *Parmigiano? Già preparato? Impossible! Non mangio.*"

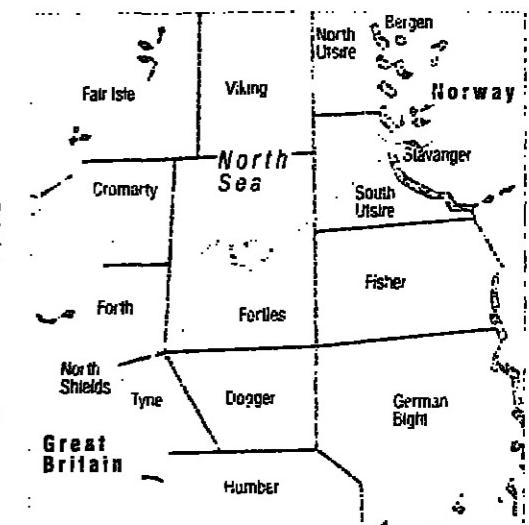
We hung tinsel stars bought at the marriage shop on a branch of tamarind, so that we had a Christmas tree and made little trees to eat, cut out of green halwa. In honour of the Italians we ate on Christmas Eve.

The boys had kept their spaghetti to serve us for Christmas Day lunch. Enough for five, they said, but there were to be 10 of us. Genoveffa had invited some Gichkis and hadn't told Gianni, who was having a fit in the kitchen when Captain Khalid arrived with three bottles of Smugglers. "This is our national dish," said Genoveffa proudly, indicating the spaghetti. She had not only omitted to tell anybody about the extra guests she had invited but had also done nothing about the meal.

From 'The Afghan Amulet' by Sheila Paine © Penguin (£6.99)

Why just listen to the shipping forecast?

When, like Simon Calder, you can have the 'north-east six, rain later' experience first-hand



Color Viking at rest in Bergen. Inset: a fellow passenger scans the horizon for signs of a pint for less than £5

Photographs: Simon Calder

To find out how much of an understatement "Force Five: fresh breeze" really is, take a cut-price boat trip around the Radio 4 Shipping Forecast, and feel that 24mph northerly "fresh breeze" ripping through your windcheater. A midwinter cruise from North Shields to North Uistre and back costs as little as £50, and takes you through Tyne, Forties and South Uistre, narrowly missing Dogger and clipping Forth.

Even for listeners in the bath rather than Biscay, the Shipping Forecast is a wonderful piece of poetry. Four times each day, the solemn tones of the Radio 4 continuity announcer radiate from the Long Wave transmitter at Droitwich, Worcestershire (you can see this relic of Empire, and hear its interference with your radio, when you drive past on the M5). "North-east six, rain later, good becoming moderate" – the wind direction and speed, general weather and visibility are scribbled down by crew aboard fishing boats and supertankers, yachts and oil rigs. All the waters around the British Isles have been carved up into irregular polygons and allotted exotic names, with North and South Uistre the latest additions to the litany. These are sea areas on the coast of Norway. The precise meaning of Uistre (pronounced *ut-seer-a* by Radio Four) is shrouded in an impetuous North Sea fog.

Color Viking, which gamely cuts a cross-section through the shipping chart between the UK and Bergen, is a Channel ferry with attitude. She sails one of the oldest maritime links between Britain and Scandinavia, but her primary purpose at this time of year is to take Norwegians on Christmas shopping trips to Newcastle. Thus they avoid Norway's high taxes on everything from tobacco to trolls – both of which are prominently on sale in the huge on-board supermarket.

Your role is to make up the numbers, to be part of the passenger ballast filling the cabins and the bar-stools not already occupied by Norwegians. In return you get a berth for three nights (the middle one spent in port in Bergen) and four days at sea. Not that you can tell where you are once the door slams shut on your cabin. Cut-price cruisers are billeted in the bowels of the ship: below the truck deck and well beneath the water level. Your lowly posi-

How to join the cruise

Simon Calder paid £84 for a four-day voyage from Newcastle, visiting both Stavanger and Bergen, through Color Line (0191-296 1313). The price includes sharing a two-berth cabin and buffet breakfast each morning. A lower fare of £50 applies if you share a four-berth cabin, but availability is limited. From 6 January until 26 March, children travel free when sharing a cabin with a minimum of one adult.

tion does not mean comfort is absent, though: every cabin has a built-in bathroom.

The company also throws in a buffet breakfast each morning. To judge by the bulging pockets and sleeves of some passengers, the extravagant spread of cheese, herring, eggs and meat provides snacks for the whole day. Full meals are expensive: an all-you-can-eat dinner weighs in at £26, but includes plenty of fruit to help ward off scurvy.

Since the Norwegians are numerically and financially ascendant on the voyage, most on-board entertainment is aimed at them. The Tyne Pub is one corner of the vessel where the British hold sway. Lubricated by duty-free Newcastle Brown Ale, they indeed sway back and forth to the music of Phil Dorn, pianist. Like the Radio 4 forecast of air pressure in Shannon, most of the ensemble are "falling, slowly".

Not to your taste, perhaps, but more promising than the Club Viking. This Nordically sparse nightclub reeks of early Seventies decor and early Abba hits. The barman does good business in *Jule ol* (Christmas beer) and light trade in a cocktail called Stormy Weather – vodka, apricot liqueur and Cointreau. While the waves crash around outside, the house band earns just a ripple of applause. Take your portable radio out on deck, and the Radio 4 announcer reveals the latest from the Channel Light Vessel Automatic.

Even among the non-imbibers, a kind of virtual drunkenness soon sets in aboard *Color Viking*. You lurch unsteadily around the decks as sea area Forties roars. If the swell proves too strong for sleep, however, you can always go sightseeing. Under

Who to ask

Norwegian Tourist Board, Charles House, 5-11 Lower Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR (0171-839 6255).

The Shipping Forecast: when to hear it

On Radio Four LW (198kHz) at 12.45am, 5.55am, 12.55pm and 5.50pm. A booklet on the forecast is available free by writing to the Enquiries Officer, The Met. Office, London Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 2SZ.

gloomy December skies, the daylight view from the deck is a monochromatic spectrum of greys. At night, this contracts to a narrow band of black. Yet as you roar into sea area Forties, the horizon becomes speckled with clusters of what look like Christmas-tree lights, each topped by a flame. You are sailing through the oil and gas fields that conferred wealth upon Norway and saved Britain from bankruptcy.

Dawn brings a fresh coat of grey to the sky, while Sue McGregor warns about an overturned lorry on the M1. Out on the North Sea, Sam GMT is the best time to ask to see the bridge. While *Color Viking* sails through open water, passengers are allowed to visit the vessel's control centre; this courtesy is not extended once she starts negotiating the tricky Norwegian coastline.

Climbing to the summit of the ship, you feel as if you have just walked into a hi-tech office. There is no sign of a big wooden wheel with a helmsman roped to it; everything is computer-controlled. Your mind is put at rest about the slight listing you felt during the night, when the First Officer shows the heeling controls that shift ballast between tanks. A deliberate list is introduced while the decks are being cleaned, so the water can run off into the sea. A Global Positioning Unit predicts *Color Viking*'s precise arrival time, while the radar system computes the course and speed of any vessel in the surrounding area.

All the electronics in the world cannot insure against accidents, though. Dents in the port side of the vessel were incurred a fortnight ago, in collision with a cargo ship in Stavanger harbour. Nineteen hours out of North Shields, South Uistre finally subsides. *Color Viking* enters Norwegian coastal waters and the port of Stavanger, this time without incident. The place where she pauses to drop off a few passengers is right alongside a cluster of cottages so postcard-perfect they look as if the Norwegian Tourist Board must have paid for them to be built. Your first impression of Norway is of neat, bright triangles of clapperboard, supporting roofs of terracotta and gold and weatherbeaten green. The only impediment to this crisp tableau is the yellow road sign saying "England", reminding residents they can escape to the Tyne any time they wish.

Bergen is another seven hours north, so the on-board distractions sail on. The Club Viking acquires a new lease of life when bilingual bingo begins. Judging by the enthusiasm with which the British contingent played, some of them must have memorised every Norwegian number from en (one) to nitti (90). The bingo caller is a ship's officer named Bjorn. Two giggling mini-cruisers decide Bjorn's catchphrase is "Sex-sexy", which is the way 66 sounds when Bjorn calls it out in Norwegian.

As with all the best cruises, passengers are given a pre-arrival briefing. Bjorn the bingo caller pops up again to prepare us for Norway, suggesting a late-night ascent in the funicular railway to the top of a nearby mountain, and running through the options for the following day. *Color Viking*'s schedule is neatly devised to make the 20 hours spent moored in Bergen harbour seem like a two-day break. Passengers can come and go as they please, treating their floating hotel as if it were, well, a floating hotel. Shoppers are briefed about the alarming lack of bargains ashore, and told how to claim back Norwegian VAT – for any purchase of over £30 you bring the receipt back on board, and the purser hands out cash for the amount of the tax. Back in the bar, the faces of Norwegians reveal the grim desperation of drinkers who realise they will shortly be back in the land of the £5 pint.

One day and one hour after leaving North Shields, the *Color Viking* slides into her berth at Bergen. Against a background buzz of static, 700 miles from Droitwich, Radio 4 still cuts comfortably through. After the longest of nights on the waves, you know now why the shipping forecast is on Long Wave.

CRUISERS' STORIES

Cleo

from Canada

The voyage to Norway offered the chance to combine cruising and skiing. Did Cleo find snow? "No – unusually for mid-December, the resort of Voss was closed. So rather than throwing myself into the harbour, I went shopping in Bergen and found a slightly used skiing sweater at the Salvation Army shop for only 50 kroner [about £5]. I also found a Norwegian skier!"

Morten

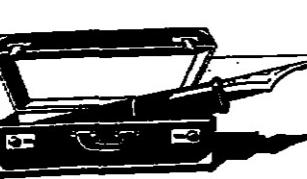
from Redditch

Morten lives in Redditch, but is in love with Nordic life. Did the voyage satisfy his Scandinavian affinity? "I did bond with an eight-foot troll, so to speak [an oversized version of this legendary Norwegian creature embraces visitors to Bergen]. But there just wasn't time to do the place justice, and the trip made me determined to work my way around Scandinavia at some time in the future."

Emma

from Stoke

Emma went sailing in search of a real-life Viking. Did she find him? "No, but I spotted quite a lot of likely prospects. I loved climbing down the mountain at midnight through the pine trees with streams rushing past, although at one point, I tripped and cut my knee and saw my blood rushing past, too."



Something to declare

Bargain of the week

Not every seat on every flight is full. Until the end of the year, Maersk Air (0171-333 0066) offers a spouse fare which makes business class even cheaper than economy on flights to Scandinavia. Tickets from Gatwick to Kristiansand in Norway, with an optional day out in Copenhagen, cost £250 each for a husband and wife in business class. People of opposite gender not technically married have in the past succeeded in obtaining this fare.

Trouble spots

This week's advice on places to avoid, from our man at Broadcasting House

The BBC has issued new instructions to its journalists on high-risk parts of the world. "Category One" countries are deemed exceptionally high risk, where battlefield conditions prevail. Burundi and Somalia have this month been re-classified as Category One, joining Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia and Chechnya.

The risks of travel in Iraq and Sierra Leone have been downgraded to Category Two: "areas of abnormally high risk, often with extensive civil disorder or guerrilla warfare". Other countries in this classification include Colombia, Croatia (outside Dubrovnik, Split and Zagreb), southern Mexico and south-east Turkey.

Further information on these regions should be obtained from the Foreign Office (not the BBC) by calling 0171-270 4129; on BBC 2 Ceefax page 564 onwards; on the Internet at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

Visitors' book

A Soldier's Life, part of the Discovery, Newcastle

Enjoyed our visit after we eventually found the Discovery; we didn't realise it was in the Science & Engineering Museum – Mary and Mike Angulo, Somerset.

An enjoyable and nostalgic exhibition. Brings back childhood wartime memories – Joseph Rees, Cramlington.

Very interesting; puts several regimental museums to shame – D G Bell, Newcastle.

Very good for nothing [the exhibition, like the whole of the Discovery, is free] – Catherine Palmer, no address.

Soldier Soldier inspired me to see this. Ace! – K Gunn, Washington.

A Special Announcement

The Costa Rica Wanderer

Due to variable flight bookings during the first half of 1996 we are able to present a number of departures at a fraction of the normal tariff for those that have the flexibility of travelling at short notice and at a time of independent choice. However, we should warn would-be travellers that these offers are very popular and those that were offered during November and December sold within days of being announced, so early telephone reservations are essential.

THE COSTA RICA WANDERER

Costa Rica is being compact and varied is the ideal location in which to tour and relax. The Wanderer programme concept is simple: it includes nine flights, a Glastick to and from San Jose, one night's stopover accommodation to be followed by a series of 6 accommodated weeks that can be redeemed at a variety of hotels and lodges throughout the country. Car hire can be obtained for approximately \$US 300 per week thus making it an ideal arrangement for those that wish to take advantage of our organisation yet free to roam.



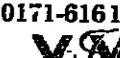
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Thursday - per person in a twin	£295.00
January 11, 18, 25	£295.00
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April 3	£295.00
April 11, 18, 25	£295.00
May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	£295.00
Single room supplement	£64.00

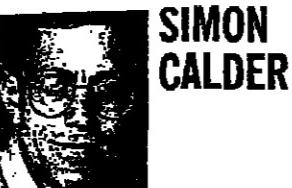
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'Lottery regulator Peter Davis could have bought a six-journey pass on Delta Airlines for his US foray. It would have cost the taxpayer £515'



In a Yuletide spirit of generosity, I would like to offer some advice to Peter Davis – the man whose job it is to regulate the National Lottery. Mr Davis's liberal enjoyment of free flights on a business trip around the US, courtesy of a shareholder in Camelot and against the express wishes of the Department of National Heritage, created a chorus of demands for his resignation. And all because he wanted to save taxpayers' money.

Next time Mr Davis has business in the Land of the Freebie, I suggest he takes advantage of the excellent-value airpasses offered by US airlines to UK travellers. Instead of taking a series of free flights aboard Gfech's corporate jet, Mr Davis could have bought a six-coupon airpass on Delta Airlines. This allows the same itinerary as Mr Davis enjoyed – Dallas, Austin, Tallahassee, Atlanta, New York and Boston – yet would cost the taxpayer just £515.

Business travellers like Mr Davis might counter that they need the sort of flexibility you get only with full-fare tickets on scheduled airlines (or, indeed, a private jet). Fortunately, Delta's airpass is a fairly flexible friend. After the first sector, there is no penalty for changing your flights as often as you wish. You can do that with lottery numbers.

Which leaves the transatlantic stretch. The rock-bottom fare is about £200 on Air India, but given Mr Davis's professional interest in gaming, it seems appropriate to choose an airline that offers insight betting. I asked a North American fares expert, Jim Green of Quest Worldwide, to come up with a tempting deal for the lottery regulator. He can offer a London-Boston return on Virgin Atlantic for £249, including Air Passenger Duty (so the poor taxpayer at least gets some tax back). Mr Davis would be able to indulge in the seaback gambling available on all of Richard Branson's planes.

Aside from any stake money, the whole trip would cost the taxpayer under £800 – considerably less than the cost of Mr Davis's transatlantic flights alone. Aboard Virgin, Mr Davis would also be able to sup as much Christmas cheer as he wishes, thanks to the free drinks policy. Now that's the sort of festive freebie I would be happy to accept.

As Britain's railways wind down for their annual Christmas break, Thomas Almond of Bath writes with an update on the "ghost train" between Waterloo and the West. "After reading your article, I decided to book on the Bath to Waterloo express for my Christmas visit to London – the chance of a near-empty train at this time of year seemed too good to miss." Mr Almond called the Rail Direct booking line (0800 450450) to book, stressing he wanted the Waterloo train rather than the usual Paddington service. He was duly assured he would reach his chosen Waterloo.

"Imagine my surprise when a ticket arrived for the train to Paddington. I phoned to query it, and was told there were no trains to Waterloo. Is this all part of pre-privatisation conspiracy? If they deny the existence of a train now, presumably they're not obliged to run the service after the sell-off."

Reluctantly, Mr Almond set out to catch the Paddington train, which turned up 40 minutes late and had no heating. He wonders whether privatisation is responsible for this sorry state of affairs, too: "If BR managers are busy organising their management buy-outs, they presumably have less time and energy to run the railways. Should their bids succeed, no doubt they will start paying full attention to the trains once more and thereby proclaim the sell-off to be a success."

Wherever your travels lead over Christmas, as Bing Crosby (nearly) crooned – may your delays be merry and bright.

WORLD DEPARTURES

Package holidaymakers are not the only ones who will pay more next summer. Independent travellers using charters face higher seat-only fares too – more than £200 for flights to Malaga in August, for example. To make life easier for late-night arrivals, Thomson Air Fares (reservations: 0121-252 3503) give the option of resort transfers, with a typical price of £12 for a bus ride from Alicante airport to Benidorm.

Free beer at the Heineken brewery, free food samples at Schiphol airport and the Amsterdam branch of M&S, and free music at the annual Park Pop festival in The Hague – all recommended in the *Cool Guide to Amsterdam* (£6.95). Subject matter veers toward sex, drugs and rock and roll, but it also suggests where to

rent a recumbent bicycle (the sort where you lie back and pedal).

The first exhibition devoted solely to the work of Johannes Vermeer will open in The Hague from 1 March to 2 June. Because demand is likely to be high, the Netherlands Board of Tourism is selling advance tickets; write to PO Box 523, London SW1E 6NT.

The most festive travel gesture of the year arrives on Christmas Day, courtesy of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Few buses are operating in London on Christmas Day, and all but one are charging unfestively high fares (minimum £1, no child reductions). But route 732, between Edgeware and Cricklewood, is being sponsored by the T&G, and all travel is free.

Win a weekend break

Our first prize is a weekend in Iceland, including a tour of the island's natural wonders. Second prize is a break in Shetland – and a night at Britain's most northerly country house hotel.

Though you might be living in a land of the midday gloom, the northern lights are only 25 answers and a few months away. The questions and the prizes this year in the *Independent's* Christmas travel competition celebrate the year.

First prize is an escorted weekend break for two in the Icelandic capital Reykjavik, courtesy of Arctic Experience. The winners will fly on Icelandair from Heathrow or Glasgow to Keflavik airport, from where they will be transferred to the comfortable and central Hotel Leifur Eriksson in Reykjavik for a three-night stay.

The prize includes a half-day city tour and a "Golden Circle" day trip of the island's natural wonders, and normally costs around £450 per person. To find out more about the Arctic Experience programme of holidays to Iceland, Greenland and other northerly destinations, call 01737 218801.

To enter, write your answers on a piece of paper, together with your name, address and daytime telephone number and send it to Free Freeze, The Independent, 1

Aberdeen, Belfast, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Glasgow or Manchester courtesy of Business Air's scheduled services. A hire car and dinner, bed and breakfast at the UK's most northerly country house hotel, Busta House, will be arranged through Shetland Islands Tourism. For more information and bookings on Business Air's growing network of flights around the UK, call 01224 401349. For further details on Shetland Islands Tourism on 01959 693434. And for details about Busta House Hotel call 01806 522506.

Third prize is the year's most esoteric travel guide, the fascinating *Siberian BAM Railway Guide*. Published by Trailblazer at £12.95, it is an encyclopedic companion to the century's greatest rail project, the Baikal-Amur railway across northern Siberia.

To enter, write your answers on a piece of paper, together with your name, address and daytime telephone number and send it to Free Freeze, The Independent, 1

Canada Square, London E14. 5DL. All entries must be received by 9 January 1995. Winners will be selected randomly from the entries containing the highest number of correct answers. Departure to Reykjavik must be on one of the following dates: 13 March, 5 or 25 April (Heathrow only); 14 April; 25 October, 22 November or 6 December 1995, and is subject to availability. Departure to Shetland should be before 31 December 1996. Dates of flights are subject to availability and should be arranged directly with Business Air.

The answers and names of winners will appear in the *Independent* on 13 January 1995. Normal *Independent* Newspaper rules apply. Names and addresses of entrants will be used by Arctic Experience and Business Air solely for the companies' own direct-mail purposes. Please add "do not list" to your address if you prefer not to be contacted; this will not affect your chances of winning the competition.

The questions

FOR STARTERS

1 From which island does the singer Björk hail?

2 When I called you last night from _ , in which Scottish city were Abba for "Supertrouper"?

3 In the song "Cap in Hand", which Canadian province can The Proclaimers say without starting to stutter?

4 What geographical feature was celebrated in the 1977 Christmas No. 1?

5 This year saw a solar eclipse across Asia. But where, according to Carly Simon, did you fly "your Lear jet over -- to see a total eclipse of the sun"?

SCOTLAND

6 Is the most popular tourist attraction in Scotland?: (a) the Glenfiddich distillery; (b) New Lanark; (c) Edinburgh Castle

7 Which is NOT in Scotland?: (a) Berwick; (b) North Berwick; (c) South Uist

8 Odd one out: (a) Cromarty; (b) Forth; (c) Malin; (d) Clyde.

9 Which of the following is the most northerly point in Scotland?: (a) Mullie Flugga; (b) Duncansby Head; (c) John O'Groats.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

10 Which city has the busiest airport?: (a) Copenhagen; (b) Reykjavik; (c) Oslo

11 In which country was much of *Dr Zhivago* filmed?: (a) Finland; (b) Greenland; (c) Iceland

12 What is Europe's Capital of Culture for 1996?

13 By which other name is Svalbard known?

14 Which national team currently holds the European soccer championship?

NORTH AMERICA

15 Canadian city where Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards jumped to fame?

16 Which is the largest island in North America?

17 The highest mountain in North America (both names required)?

18 Alaskan town that lent its name to an ill-fated tanker?

19 Which is furthest west?: (a) North Dakota; (b) North Carolina; (c) North-West Territories

20 Which is nearest the South Pole?: (a) Yemen; (b) South Yemen; (c) Micronesia

21 Which is closest to South Ronaldsay, Orkney?: (a) Southwold; (b) Southend; (c) Southampton

AND FINALLY

22 Which is furthest east?: (a) North Russia; (b) West Russia; (c) South Russia

23 Which is closest to North Pole?: (a) North Riding; (b) North Yorkshire; (c) East Riding

24 Which is nearest the South Pole?: (a) Yemen; (b) South Yemen; (c) Micronesia

25 Which is closest to South Ronaldsay, Orkney?: (a) Southwold; (b) Southend; (c) Southampton

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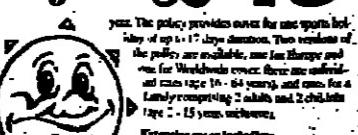
The likelihood is that you may take several trips away in the course of a year. And, as the saying goes, "you can't go home again". So here's a question: how do you keep track of your travel history? And, if you don't have a travel agent, how do you know what you've spent?

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money

For every genuine 'wonder stock' that crops up there are always plenty of opportunities to jump on the bandwagon after it has started rolling. You don't need to be there at the beginning to make a packet of money

This is the time of year when the statisticians come out of the wood-work and give us their annual "what might have been" lecture. We will hear a lot in the next ten days about where we should have put our money this year if we had wanted to maximise our returns.

Newspapers and stockbrokers produce lists that summarise which shares did best and how the various asset classes (equities, bonds, property and so on) have fared over the last 12 months.

It is best to approach this annual, unforgiving exercise in a spirit of due humility. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but as one well-known investor of my acquaintance puts it: "Anyone who drives a car with their eyes firmly fixed on the rear-view mirror is likely to end up hitting a wall."

There is only so much of value you can learn from how things turned out in practice; and even less from aspiring to find the best of all conceivable investments in a year when

above-average performance would have served you more than adequately. As long as you avoided property and gold, and steered clear of construction shares and emerging markets, you will have probably done fairly well in 1993, whatever you did.

I dare say that you, like me, were one of the millions who missed out on British Biotech – this year's best-performing share (up just over 200 per cent) – which may turn out to be what a number of excitable brokers are already calling the next Glaxo. Well, the only correct response to that is "too bad." There are worse disappointments in life than missing out on the early rise of a good share, even one which had discovered a potentially world-beating drug.

If you are one of those whom this does worry, experience suggests that the way to console yourself is to remember two things:

One is that every gain in the stock market has to be measured against the risk involved. Few of us have the



JONATHAN DAVIS
INVESTMENTS

time or the knowledge required to find out what British Biotech does, let alone to appreciate the commercial significance of any new compound it may have discovered. Investing in the company at this stage, before commercial and regulatory trials have established what its drugs can safely do, is a high-risk strategy. Those who are prepared to take on that risk have earned their 200 per cent gain. It does not mean that you should necessarily join them.

The second consoling thought is that for every gen-

tine "wonder stock" that crops up, there are always plenty of opportunities to jump on the band wagon after it has started rolling. You don't need to be there at the beginning to make a packet of money out of it.

With the benefit of hindsight, you would need to have started buying Glaxo shares in the 1970s in order to maximise your return, but anyone who latched onto it in the 1980s – long after its ulcer drug Zantac was known about and indeed had started to be sold commercially – could still have done handsomely out of it. The shares have risen by the best part of 50 per cent this year alone, thanks to the success of the Wellcome takeover, which looks like turning out to be one of the corporate steals, not just of this past year, but of the decade as well.

Scanning through the lists of the most successful investments in 1993, two other things strike me. One is how confounded the so-called experts have again been this year. The consensus of opin-

ion among professional forecasters this time last year was, by and large, that this was going to be a fair but tough year for financial markets, with strong economic growth likely to require higher interest rates, particularly in the United States. I personally remember listening to one highly regarded US economist – a man with formidable connections in New York and Washington – confidently predicting in February that the Federal Reserve would have to raise US interest rates at least twice before the autumn to choke off demand.

In fact, not for the first time, the reverse of what the pundits expected has happened. Both the Fed in the States, and to a lesser extent European central banks, have all found themselves struggling to cope with a rather different phenomenon, namely a worrying slowdown in their economies which has left them cutting rather than raising interest rates. If there is one fundamental story in investment this year it has to be the general decline in

interest rates over the past year. The Fed, the German Bundesbank and the British authorities have all cut their rates in the last two weeks. While modest in themselves when combined with earlier cuts in the cost of money, the cumulative effect has been highly significant.

What is more, in addition to the short-term rate changes made by governments and central banks, there is also an even more profound force at work – which I believe is also the second main lesson to be drawn from the year's events in the markets.

The interest rates that the authorities can control directly are short term ones. But what really matters to investment markets are long-term interest rates. They ultimately determine how shares and other classes of financial asset are valued. They reflect what investors expect to happen over time to inflation and economic performance.

Governments cannot influence them directly. This year the yield on the US long bond – a 30-year government bond

– has fallen sharply from 8 per cent at the start of the year to just over 6 per cent now. It means that the long bond yield, which peaked at over 12 per cent in the early 1980s, continues its long-run secular down trend. Last year's crisis in the bond market now looks like an aberration, and there is no sign that long-term interest rates have yet reached the bottom.

In real terms – after adjusting for inflation – long-term interest rates remain above the 2 per cent to 3 per cent level that was the norm in the 1950s and 1960s, so there may yet be room for further falls now that the inflationary horrors of the 1970s are finally being purged from investors' memories.

It is this decline in long-term interest rates that has helped to give us the extended bull market in shares that we have experienced since the early 1980s, and the message from the past 12 months is that this unprecedented period of positive stock market returns has not yet come to an end.

The worst the news the better for anyone looking to make good money out of recovery

By Alison Eadie

The M&G Recovery Fund, launched in 1989 to buy the shares everyone else was selling, is now the UK's third largest unit trust with 150,000 unitholders and £1.1 billion under management. Its size limits manoeuvrability and presents a challenge, but not an impossible one, says its manager Richard Hughes. Big stakes and dramatic recoveries are needed to maintain outper-

formance, but so far the market keeps throwing up opportunities.

The fund's shares are currently languishing a little at 25p after touching 35.5p earlier this year. But average annual compound growth rate since launch is 20 per cent and capital growth is the objective.

The philosophy of the fund has been refined over the years, says Mr Hughes.

First he has to decide if there is a solution, or if the company is in an irretrievable mess. If there is hope,

but the starting point is still to look for companies in trouble. The bigger the bad news appears – preferably on the front page of the Financial Times – the better.

"Investors see bad news, panic and sell, I then look and start to do my work," says Mr Hughes.

First he has to decide if there is a solution, or if the company is in an irretrievable mess. If there is hope,

there must also be the prospect of the shares moving up strongly as problems are solved.

The three elements of recovery are usually a change of management, an injection of capital and the passage of time.

Mr Hughes' strategy is to wait for a time when the company is in a position to benefit from the passage of time.

The fund's largest holding is presently TSB, whose shares have soared since the announcement of the merger with Lloyds Bank.

From a low of 217p they soared to a peak of 417p and are still within touching distance of £4.

Other winners this year have included Fisons, taken over by Rhone Poulen Rorer, and Kleinwort Benson, which was acquired by Dresdner Bank.

Despite the boost provided by takeovers, M&G has a house policy of not supporting hostile bids.

They are expensive and often work out badly for both sides, says Mr Hughes.

"We accept agreed bids and bids which have gone unconditional, but we believe there are sound commercial reasons for not accepting hostile bids," he adds. He points to the examples of Molins and Birmid.

The Recovery Fund by its nature courts the danger of holdings going bust. Some 23 have done just that in the life of the fund, a tally of almost one a year.

The biggest failures for Mr Hughes, who has managed the fund for eight years, were Lowndes, Queensway and Davies &

Newman – each of which represented 1 per cent of total assets. However, he has avoided some of the biggest nasties of recent years including Polly Peck, British & Commonwealth and Coloroll.

The slide to the danger of one of the investments going bust is the enhanced likelihood of a share being taken over, usually at a significant premium to the current market price at the time of the bid.

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Qualcast. Bolstered by a 17 per cent stake held by M&G Recovery Fund, Molins fought off five takeover attempts in four years, the last at 275p a share in 1990. Retaining its independence, the company has gone on to greater glory and its shares reached a high of 825p this year.

Birmid Qualcast, supported by M&G, saw off the first Blue Circle bid in 1988 at 380p a share, but then accepted the second a few months later at 450p.

As well as a time to buy, there is a time to sell. The fund holds investments for an average of five to six years, excepting takeover stocks which tend to exit faster.

Sometimes the fund loses faith. Mr Hughes saw the writing on the wall for Ferranti and managed to sell many shares before the company collapsed.

Sometimes the time to sell is when the investment has made up its under-performance and matched its peers. When a company's return on sales and capital are up to the industry average or its price to earnings ratio matches the stockmarket norm, there is a case for saying it has recovered.

The third option is to wait for outperformance. Mr Hughes points out that there is a virtuous circle associated with recovery stocks. As companies emerge from the mire, investment rises, profits go up, morale improves and good people are attracted. Former "dogs" often go on to be stars.

It is important for the fund to capture at least some of that uplift, as the multiplier effect on a big bet is dramatic. The fund sold its 13 per cent stake in Standard Chartered Bank too soon, admits Mr Hughes, although it made a lot of money.

It is bought into the between 50p and 100p in 1991, after adjusting for the four-for-one share split, and sold into strength – but missed the spectacular rise of the last six months when the shares rocketed to a high at 625p, although it too has since come off the peak to around 550p this past week.

Although the fund has no sector preferences, it tends to be overweight in manufacturing and light in oil and commodity stocks. It is also biased towards medium and smaller companies with 70 per cent of its money outside the FTSE 100 companies.

Overseas holdings represent just 2 per cent of the fund and are unlikely ever to

rise above 5 per cent, says Mr Hughes. "From time to time I'll dip overseas, if colleagues come up with a good idea," he says.

Mr Hughes is at his

busiest in recessions when there is a glut of buy opportunities. The fund itself performs poorly in recession and shines in economic upturn.

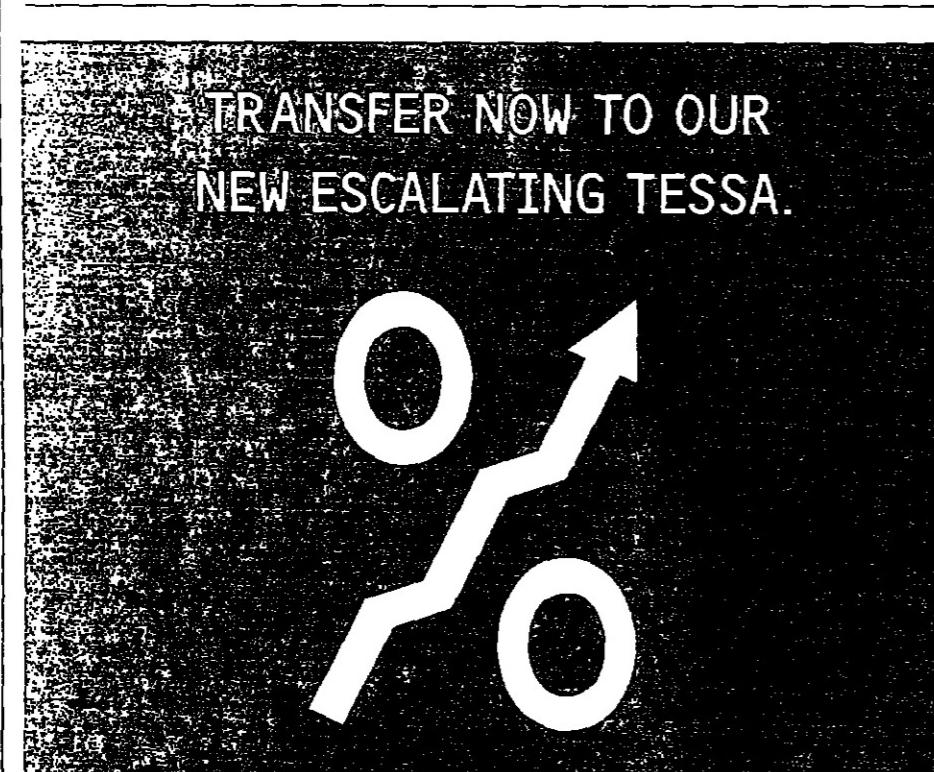
It is presently at a halfway house, says Mr Hughes, with on balance more buy than sell candidates.

Rather than venturing into pastures new, the fund this year has been supporting rights issues and adding to existing holdings including United Biscuits, BICC and Lucas.

With the stockmarket quite high, Mr Hughes is being choosy about what to buy to ensure the right returns for the future. He is reasonably optimistic that with 2 to 3 per cent economic growth and 2 to 3 per cent inflation companies have a stable environment in which to prosper.

He keeps a watchful eye on the economic cycle to guard against buying too soon in a downturn and selling too early in a recovery. His goal of beating the All Share index is no easy task with a big fund, so he keeps his fingers crossed that the years of recovery will continue to outnumber those of recession.

M&G Recovery Investment Trust is based at Three Quays, Tower Hill, London EC3, telephone 0171-626-4588.



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Northern Rock's new limited issue Tessa will offer a fixed rate of 7.64 per cent tax-free for five years for maturing Tessa accounts of £9,000 re-invested with the society – if investors guarantee to leave the capital and interest untouched for the full five years. The compounded return over the whole period will be 44.5 per cent.

A variable rate option offers 7.25 per cent on the maximum £9,000 maturing Tessa rolled over with Northern Rock, and an ini-

tial 7 per cent on smaller balances over £3,000.

...from TSB

TSB is also launching a new fixed-rate Tessa, paying a guaranteed 7 per cent a year tax-free on amounts between £3,000 and the maximum of £9,000.

...and from A&L

Alliance & Leicester is offering a new variable rate Tessa, paying 6.1 per cent up to £3,000, rising to 6.5 per cent on amounts over £6,600 and 7.25 per cent on maturing Tessa accounts with Northern Rock, and an ini-

Mortgage cut

Yorkshire Building Society has cut its variable mortgage rate to a market-leading 7.39 per cent from next month.

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Coventry Building Society is offering five year fixed-rate mortgages at 6.79 per cent for up to 85 per cent of valuation, with no penalty for early redemption. A discount of 1.45 per cent for four years is also available on variable rate mortgages, but in this case there is a six month penalty for early redemption.

FEAR OF FINANCE

Clifford German



Last week the Inland Revenue published a report, commissioned by the Chancellor, which promised a concerted effort to rewrite 200 years of piecemeal tax legislation, reverse the trend to increasingly lengthy and unintelligible Finance Bills and translate everything in future into plain English.

By the Inland Revenue's own admission it will take a team of dozens of tax officials some five years to complete the task.

Many experts, mainly among the ranks of accountants and tax advisers, are openly doubtful whether the task will actually be completed in time, because of the sheer complexity of the task and the resources which will be needed to do it properly.

Others doubt whether simplification of the language would actually help - because simplification would do away with paragraphs of clarification and simultaneously introduce new areas of doubt and differences of interpretation.

And even on the proposed timetable the review will not be ready until long after the start of self-assessment, which will oblige individual taxpayers to take over responsibility for completing their own tax statements and calculating their own tax liabilities for the financial year 1996-97.

Tax advisers are already rubbing their hands at the prospect of a flock of frightened taxpayers forced to seek professional advice to avoid making incriminating mistakes.

But London-based chartered accountants Smith & Williamson have already pointed out that a change in tax law introduced by Kenneth Clarke last month will soon make the daunting task of self-assessment more

things will be even more complex if the taxpayer has received interest gross which is still liable for tax. Not perhaps the best way to start a process of tax simplification.

If asked to name the second best performing UK asset class not many people would say commercial property. Nevertheless between 1968 and 1994 it was the top performer for 10 years - second only to UK equities (12 years) and way ahead of gilts (3 years) and cash (2 years). Furthermore, some experts are predicting that commercial property, having been dull for most of the 1990s, is about to enjoy something of a purple patch.

Norwich Union has been beating the drum the loudest, pointing out that property currently has an average yield of around 8 per cent, which is similar to the yields on gilts and twice the average on equities.

It predicts that increases in rental growth will see commercial property outperform equities and gilts for the next three to five years. For the next two years it is talking in terms of total annual returns of 10-15 per cent.

Such forecasts will do little for investors desperate to give up the day job. Nevertheless, with most experts pointing to a continuation of low inflation and low interest rates, they are certainly worthy of due attention.

Paul Ashby at Barclays Unicorn, says: "Don't commit more than 5-10 per cent of a portfolio to property, but for those bearish about equities it is probably the next best thing after Bond PEPs."

Mark Searle, investment director at

Best borrowing rates

	Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption penalty
MORTGAGES						
Fixed rates	Hinchley & Rugby 0800 774499 Chelsea BS 01242 271441 Cheshire BS 0800 243278	0.50 to 1/1/97 4.74 to 1/2/98 7.49 to 1/1/01	70 80 90	£250 £195 —	3 yrs unemployment ins Free redundancy ins £300 cash rebate	1st 5 yrs: indiv determined 1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid To 1/1/01: 6 mths interest
Variable rates	Northumbrian Rock BS 0800 591500 Greenwich BS 0181 858 8212 Abbey National 0800 555100	1.44 to 1/2/97 4.99 for 3 yrs 6.34 to 31/1/01	90 95 75	— — —	Refund valuation fee Refund valuation fee	1st 5 yrs: 6 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed To 30/1/01: individually determined
First time buyers fixed rates	Bristol & West BS 0800 100117 Newcastle BS 0191 244 2442 Coventry BS 0800 126125	0.95 to 30/11/96 4.59 to 28/2/98 6.94 to 1/4/00	90 100 95	£275 £100 £250	— — —	To 30/1/00: 5 mths interest 1st 5 yrs: 4 mths interest To 1/4/01: 6 mths interest
First time buyers variable rates	Scarborough BS 0800 590547 Greenwich BS 0181 858 8212 Northern Rock BS 0800 591500	1.29 for 1 yr 3.98 for 2 yrs 5.19 to 1/2/99	95 95 95	— — —	£150 cash rebate Refund valuation fee	1st 4 yrs: rebate reclaimed & 6.2% of sum repaid 1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed 1st 5 yrs: 6 mths interest
PERSONAL LOANS						
Unsecured	Telephone	APR		Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)	With insurance	Without insurance
Direct Line	0141 248 9966	14.90E		£114.41	£102.59	
Midland Bank	0800 180180	15.40		£116.54	£103.14	
Abbey National	0345 545556	15.50		£115.18	£103.26	
Secured (second charge)	Clydesdale Bank 0800 240024 First Direct 0800 242424 Royal B of Scotland Via branch	8.60 Neg 9.70 80% 9.80 70%		Max LTV Advance £3K - £15K £3K to neg	6 mths to 25 years Up to 40 years 3 years - retirement	Term
OVERDRAFTS						
Telephone	Account			Authorised	Unauthorised	
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76 9.5	2.18 29.5		
Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 995995	Alliance	0.76 9.5	2.20 29.8		
Abbey National	0500 200500	Current	0.79 9.9	2.18 29.5		
CREDIT CARDS						
Telephone	Card		Min income	Rate pm %	APR %	Annual fee
Standard						
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.98G	12.10	— D
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60	£12
Royal B of Scotland	0800 161616	MasterCard	—	1.14	14.50	— D
Gold cards						
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.5417M	11.14	£120
Royal B of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05	14.50	£35H
NatWest Bank	0800 200400	Visa	£20,000	1.14	15.90	£35
STORE CARDS						
Telephone				Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods	
John Lewis	Via store	—	% pm	APR %	APR %	
Marks & Spencer	01244 681681	1.90A	—	1.39	18.00	
Sears	Via store	1.94	25.30	2.00A	26.80	
			25.90	2.20	29.8	
<small>APR Annualised percentage rate. A 1.59%, C 0.65%, APR for 0.5% over EUR. E Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years. H Annual fee waived after first year if MTR + charged to card during previous year. M Equivalent to base rate. All rates subject to change without notice.</small>						
<small>LTV Loan to value C Clients of Cotts & Co only. D No interest free period. E Annual fee waived after first year if MTR + charged to card during previous year. M Equivalent to base rate. 21 December 1995</small>						

Best savings rates

	Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS						
Portman BS	01202 292444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	5.00	Year
Skipton BS	01756 700511	3 High Street	Instant	£2,000	5.60	Year
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	5.90	Month
Skipton BS	01756 700511	3 High Street	Instant	£30,000	6.50	Year
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS						
Britannia BS	01536 392808	Capital Trust	Postal	£2,000	5.50	Year
B&W Asset	0800 303330	Instant Access	Postal	£10,000	6.05	Year
B&W Asset	0800 303330	Instant Access	Postal	£25,000	6.25	Year
Manchester BS	0161 839 5545	Money by Mail	Postal	£25,000	6.25	Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS						
Nottingham BS	0115 948 1444	Postmark	7 day P	£2,500	5.90	Year
Bradford & Bingley BS	0345 248248	Direct 60	60 day P	£15,000	6.50	Year
Cheltenham BS	0800 272505	120 Account	120 day	£1,000	5.50	Year
Halifax BS	Local branch	Special Reserve	1 year bond	£10,000	6.90	Maturity
MONTHLY INTEREST						
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	5.62	Month
Leopold Joseph & Sons	0171 588 2323	40 Day Notice	40 day	£10,000	6.6875	Month
Scarborough BS	0800 590578	Scarborough 50	50 day	£1,000	6.00	Month
Bradford & Bingley BS	0345 248248	Direct 60	60 day P	£15,000	6.30	Month
FIXED RATE BONDS						
West Bromwich BS	0121 525 7070	Guaranteed Growth	31/1/97	£5,000	6.80F	Maturity
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Investment Certs	2 yr bond	£1,000	6.60F	Year
B'ham Midshires BS	0645 730721	Quantum Fixed	3 yr bond	£5,000	7.25F	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Investment Certs	5 yr bond	£1,000	7.25F	Year
TESSA (tax exempt special savings accounts)						
Allied Trust Bank	0171 626 0879	5 year	£9,000	7.50	Year	
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	5 year	£8,575	7.25F	Year	
Cheltenham & Gloucester	0800 717505	5 year	£3,000	7.25	Year	
Universal BS	0191 232 0973	5 year	£1	7.10	Year	
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)						
Allis Life	0181 680 7172	1 year	£5,000	4.55FN	Year	
Allis Life	0181 680 7172	2 year	£20,000	4.95FN	Year	
Financial Assurance	0181 490 9157	3 year	£20,000	5.20FN	Year	
Premium Life	01444 458721	4 year	£1,000	5.40FN	Year	
PinnACLE Insurance	0181 207 9007	5 year	£3,000	5.45FN	Year	
OFFSHORE (gross)						
Newcastle Bank, Gibr	00 350 76168	Nova Access	Instant	£5,000	6.20	Year
Newcastle Bank, Gibr	00 350 76168					

going out



STEPHEN WISDOM

It is 1660. Oliver Cromwell is dead. Samuel Pepys is busy with his diary. The Thames is as hard as a lump of stale plum pudding, and a Stuart king, Charles II, has been restored to the throne. Christmas, consigned to oblivion by the Puritan rule of the Commonwealth, has returned to the streets of the capital, and the people are in the mood to celebrate. "Christmas Restored" at the Museum of London is a trip back in time. The master of ceremonies is Sir Christemas (for Santa Claus has yet to be invented by the Coca-Cola company), and he will be holding sway over his wassailers, rowdy street-performers who teach 17th-century carols and dances, and – with a little help from the audience – perform a mumming play. If your child turns puce and sobs at the thought of performing in public, stay away. But for junior dragon-slayers or dragons, this is the perfect outing in the dog days between Boxing Day and New Year. It should restore not just Christmas but also frayed parents' nerves. Four shows a day by Izaak Caltrop (above), the story-telling, sedan-chair carrying puppet (as seen on *Blue Peter* last week) complete the museum's celebrations.

Christmas Restored, Museum of London, London Wall, London EC2Y (0171-600 3699) 27-31 Dec, 12.30pm and 1.45pm; free with admission to Museum. Suitable for 5-year-olds and upwards

Six of the best: seasonal ballets

Tales of Beatrix Potter Originally a film made in 1971, the staged version of this Ashton ballet was greeted by one critic with an urgent call for Rentokil. Parents of small children felt otherwise and the ballet has proved a sell-out in every sense.

Royal Opera House, London WC2; £9.50-£49.50 & concs

Cinderella Matthew Hart's version of the ballet provides an ideal opportunity to dust down the paper taffeta and snap on the plastic tiara.

London City Ballet, Sadler's Wells, London EC1; £5-£30 & concs

Les Patineurs Ashton's answer to Torvill and Dean is showing in a double-bill at some performances of his *Tales of Beatrix Potter* (see above). The whizzing turns of the ice skater are mimicked tonight and next Friday by the human tornado, Tetsuya Kumakawa.

Royal Ballet, Royal Opera House, London WC2; £9.50-£49.50 & concs

Peter Pan Do you believe in fairies? Graham Lustig's version of Barrie's classic will do its best to persuade you. Scottish Ballet, Theatre Royal Glasgow

Battersea hit by hurricane

The Germans have always gone in for a bit of *Sturm und Drang* – and now they are applying this talent for drama to a hi-tech theatre show called *Sensorium*, which plays at the European Theme Park, Battersea Power Station, London from today until 28 January. Doing nothing by half-measures, the 11-minute show utilises 20,000-watt surround sound system and state-of-the-art computer effects to recreate the experiences of two teenagers, Kai and Kim. Through a computer glitz, they are transported into a different time-zone where they are battered by pyrotechnic explosions, hurricanes, earthquakes and avalanches. In breathless tones, one German newspaper says that "the fantastic effects lead you into an empire of the senses". An experience even Euro-sceptics might enjoy.

European Theme Park, Battersea Power Station, London SW11. Daily (not 25 Dec)

3pm-mdn't to 28 Jan 1996

JOHN KINTI



The Nutcracker (above) Traditional Christmas treat for families that can't quite face pantomime. Small children enjoy the battling rats and the dancing sweeties and any ballet-lovers in the audience are consoled with Ivanov's snowflakes and the Sugar Plum Fairy pas de deux.

English National Ballet, Royal Festival Hall, London SE1; £8-£35 & concs

Coppelia Even with half-price concessions, ballet-going can run into money. Why not save a fortune by investing in a few yards of red plush to spread over the sofa and a few tubs of Haagen-Dazs as you catch Birmingham Royal Ballet in the ever-popular toyshop ballet on your own 24-inch.

7pm BBC2 Sat 23 Dec



FILM

WEST END

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT (15) The US-president falls in love. Dir: Trevor Lycett. Screenplay: Alan Parker. Prod: Alan Parker. Cert: 15. 6pm Sun 25 Dec, 7.30pm Sat-Sun 26 Dec.

ANGELS AND INSECTS (15) Adaptation of

Adler's novel. Dir: Carter Mander. Sat 19 Dec.

BEHEMOTH (15) The amorous adventures of Mr. Barber. Dir: John Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

ON THE CLEAR GROUND (15) A mother and her son are forced to leave their home in rural America. Dir: Michael Haneke. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE BROTHERS MICHAEL (15) Three Irish-American brothers are driven by the past.

Dir: Brian Helgeland. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

CAESAR'S WOMAN (15) A brittle Victoria

and her son are forced to leave. Dir: Brian Helgeland. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

CITY OF LOST CHILDREN (15) A man fails to find his missing daughter. Dir: Jim Jarmusch. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

CLUELESS (15) Privileged brats have an unexpected attack on their boredom. Dir: Amy Heckerling. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE FIFTH MAN (15) A man is forced to

choose between his wife and his son.

Dir: John Schlesinger. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

FAIRCHILD (15) Doyenne of 16th century

businesses, Mrs Fairchild, played by Judi Dench, is forced to give up her life.

Dir: Michael Radford. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE FIFTH KISS (15) Meg Ryan stars as a

woman who falls in love with a man she

has never met. Dir: Mike Nichols. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE GHOST IN THE SHELL (15) Japanese anime.

Dir: Shunji Iwai. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

GHOST IN THE SHELL (15) Japanese anime.

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LA HABRE (15) Sex, crime, death.

Dir: Pedro Almodóvar. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE HOUSE IN THE CUPBOARD (15)

A boy finds a house that comes to life. Dir: Clifton Daniel. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE KID (15) James Bond reappears

as a secret agent. Dir: Michael Apted. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

LEAVING LAS VEGAS (15) A man

leaves his wife and son.

Dir: Mike Nichols. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

LIVING IN OBSESSION (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: John Irvin. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE PIANIST (15) The story of

a Polish pianist who

survived the holocaust. Dir: Roman Polanski. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

PHONE NUMBERS

Dir: Curtis Hanson. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

RENT (15) The musical. Dir: Trevor Nunn. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE ROSE (15) A woman's search for

her past. Dir: John Schlesinger. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (15) The

psychotic serial killer. Dir: Jonathan Demme. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE SPIDER (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: John Irvin. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE STATION (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: John Irvin. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE THIN RED LINE (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: Terrence Malick. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE TOWER (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: John Irvin. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE TUNNEL (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: John Irvin. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE WIDOW (15) The struggle of a

husband and wife to live

in peace. Dir: John Irvin. Sat 20, 8.30pm, 9.30pm.

THE WIZARD OF OZ (15) The struggle of a

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Six of the best: Boxing Day walks

After a day of indoor festivities and feasting, Boxing Day is a time to get out and about. Many local branches of the Ramblers' Association organise walks, usually quite short and unstrenuous in the days after Christmas. Here are six of the best for 26 December and next week we shall list six more for the New Year weekend. Anyone is welcome. Call the numbers given in the event of dodgy weather, or for further information.

Whitstable, Kent An easy five-mile walk including coast and country. Meet 10.30am in the car park near All Saints Church (01843 581051)

Farnham, Surrey Choose the morning or the afternoon for a five-mile walk across fields and woodland. Meet 10.30am or 1.30pm at the Parrot Inn, Shalford (01252 316304/ 722541)

Buckland, Oxon A choice of two routes – seven miles or four-and-a-half in the Vale of the White Horse. Meet 10am at Buckland village hall (01367 241384)

Totteridge, Greater London An afternoon walk of between five and six miles around the pretty Totteridge Valley. Meet 1.30pm at Totteridge and Whetstone tube station on the Northern Line (0181-445 9958)

Portishead, Avon A five-mile walk around the town and on the coastal path, with a couple of hills. Meet 10am at the south end of the Esplanade (01275 848663)

Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan A five-mile route highlighting the changing face of Merthyr Tydfil. Meet 11am at Rhydycar car park (01443 833719)

Talent stable

Not content with feeding lions and hosing down elephants, keepers at London Zoo are performing in a living nativity play. The multi-skilling keepers will support the real stars of the show – animals drawn from the zoo's own extensive talent stable. Organisers have resisted the temptation to make the baby Jesus's animal visitors more exotic by opting for a tropical bird theme and instead stuck with a traditional Israeli farmyard selection. Four-legged thespes include Nina the camel and Tutti Frutti the donkey, with walk-on parts for sheep and goats. Other roles are filled by the audience, who are taken backstage to learn their lines before appearing alongside the furry cast members. After the nativity there's the chance to meet another star player in the animal world, as Chrissie the reindeer makes a special guest appearance.

London Zoo, Regent's Park, London NW1 (0171-449 6235) today 2pm. Adults £10, children £8

Christmas than television



Six of the best: Santa specials

The Primrose Line Santa Express South Devon Railway, The Station, Buckfastleigh, Devon (01364 642338) today, 30, 31 Dec & 1 Jan Buckfastleigh to Totnes via the North Pole and back again on a full-size steam train. Children can visit Santa's grotto – an entire carriage filled with "snow". Adults £6, children £4

Didcot Railway Centre Santa Express Didcot, Oxfordshire (01235 817200) today & 24 Dec All children receive presents according to their age – soft toys for the youngest, puzzles and colouring kits for the older children. After the grotto, visit the locomotive museum and ride on other steam trains. Adults, children £5

Mid-Hants Railway Alresford Station, Alresford, Hants (01962 733810) today & 24 Dec Father Christmas's steam train shuttles between Alton and Alresford; on the way children can visit him to pick up a present. Adults, children £6.50

East Anglian Railway Museum Chappel Station, Colchester (01206 242524) 24 Dec Two large steam trains are available for rides, one carrying Father Christmas with his sack of presents – cuddly toys, frisbees and modelling clay. Parents can relax with mince pies and sherry. The entry fee includes entry to the museum but the miniature railway is an extra 40p. Adults £5.50, children under-four £2.50

Buckinghamshire Railway Centre Quainton Rd Station, Aylesbury, Bucks (01296 655720) Today & 24 Dec Visits last two hours and include a steam trip, standard or first class, during which Santa and his pixies hand out presents. After the train comes a magic show and a ride on the miniature railway. Standard £6, first class £7

Nene Valley Railway Wansford Station, Stibbington, Peterborough, Cambs (01780 782854) Children meet Santa at his grotto in front of the station, where he hands out presents before herding them onto the steam train with his elves. The journey lasts an hour and is a round trip via Peterborough. £7, under-twentys £3.50



ROCK ANGELA LEWIS

London Community Gospel Choir Live outing for the halleluiah chorus television stars (recently on *Noel's House Party* and *GMTV*). They promise an evening of gospel music and carols given a gospel flavour. *London Jazz Cafe, London NW1 (0171-771-3444)*

Iris, Nancy Wilson, Sue Shek, Denise, Diana, Rita, Ruth and R.E.B. Widescreen Approach Hall Forest Rd E17 (0181-521 7711) 9pm-11pm Christmas Central. Tonight 8pm, 21st, 22nd, 23rd.

These Navy Boys venture out again. Wimborne Empire Way (0181-970 1234) ♦ Wimborne Park, Tonight 8.30pm, 22nd

Southampton *Zest Music's Big Red Band* blues and boogie-woogie from the well-travelled piano man. The Brook Studios Road (01722-555561) Tonight 8pm, 22nd.

St Albans The Northern Scotlands rockers play Hendon. *Hendon Town & Tennis Club (01727-83145) Tonight 8pm, 22nd*

Stone The Stone Pioneers Black & Tan on the team. *Cold Chat Studios, Read (01725-835166)* Tonight 8pm, 22nd.

Tunbridge Wells *Three Rivers* in the wobbles. *French & French, The Common (01992-584111)* Tonight 8pm, phone for price.

Wickham The Wickham blues-rockers. *Bow's Head, Breamore (01394-824261)* Tonight 8pm, phone for price.

Whitstable *Whitstable* blues-punkers. *Albion Theatre (01944-425433)* Tonight 8pm, phone for price.

jazz, world, folk etc *London* Eddie Rhine Blistering US jazzies. *Red's Head, London SW1 (0181-476 5341)* BR & South American salsa band. *Cafe Reba, The Gallery, Bayswater SW6 (0171-630 0833) ♦ Vandell, Tonight 8pm, 19, 20, 21pm, 22, 23rd, 24-25th.*



CLASSICAL ROBERT MAYCOCK

Anybody still needing an annual fix of Messiaen is in luck: one of the best comes last. James Bowman, David Wilson-Johnson and Emma Kirkby all feature in the line-up with the chorus and orchestra of Polyphony. *St John's Smith's Sq, London SW1, 7.30pm tonight*

Greydon *The Phoenix* The Spines in its colourful costumes, an original score and a cast of top stars in this show for all ages. *Fairfield Hanger, Park Lane (0181-688 0000)* Sat 1pm, Sun 7pm, £12, £10, £8, £5, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 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jumbo crossword by Mass

Cryptic

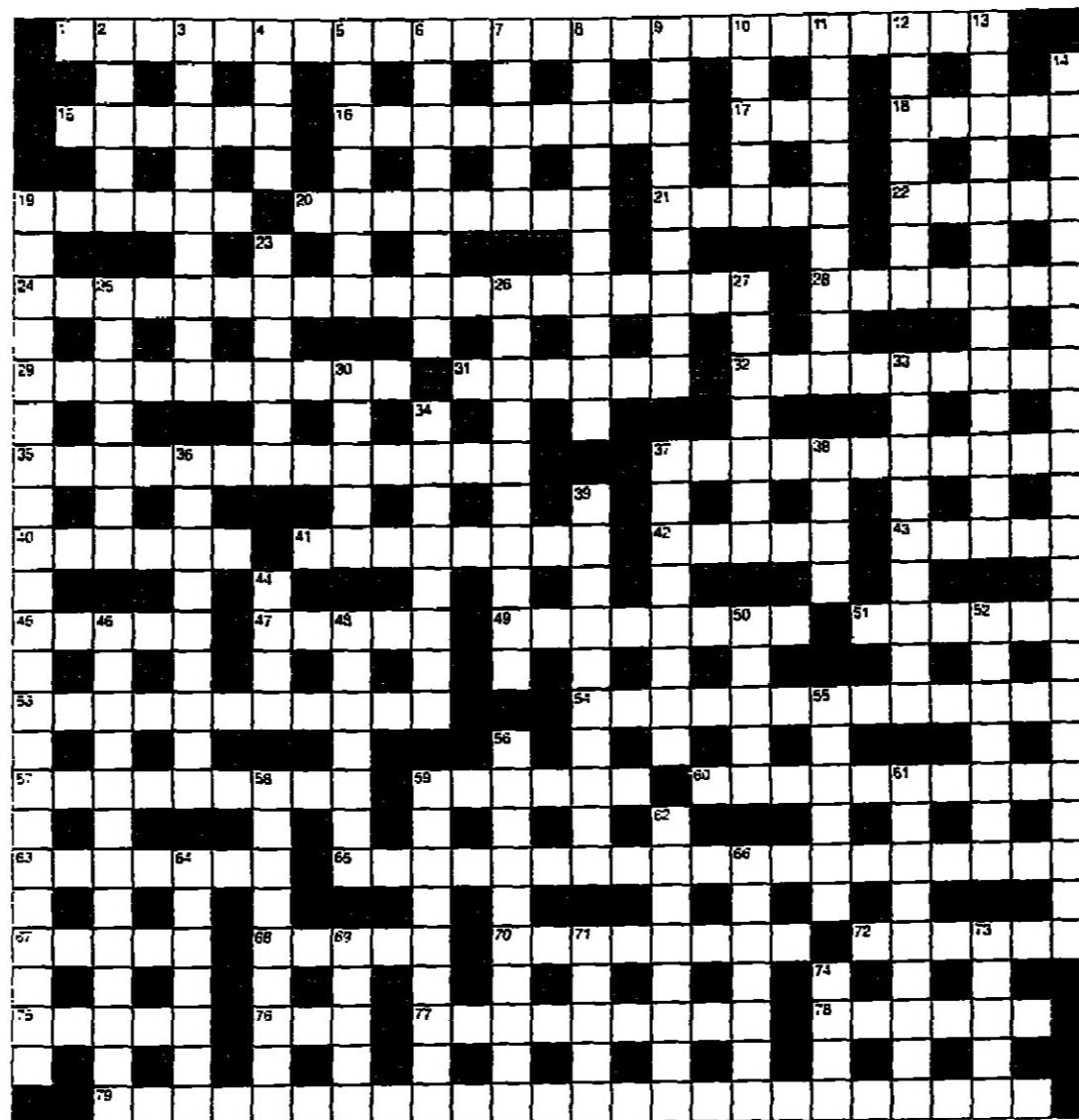
Across

- 1 Overloads, endangers a branch of the Christmas tree? (5,3,6,2,4,4)
 15 A decoration's no good kept in package (6)
 16 Record of drinks etc. Benedictines, on reserve (5-4)
 17 Spot in Judaea gains a religious leader (5)
 18 Spread, liberal, causing rumble? (5)
 19 Decay consumed wheel (6)
 20 Inhibitory mechanism, before entering drink bout (8)
 21 Trick broadcast on radio (5)
 22 Yellowish facing removed from slight arch (5)
 24 I dine with Scrooge? All is transformed without former 14d? (6,2,8,5)
 28 Crank with tool in hand (7)
 29 Such contents give more than one book a name! (5-3)
 31 Beams right off course (6)
 32 I go with cop, led as I framed? (6-2)
 35 Second-floor beds absorbing Sunday's expenses? (18,5)
 37 Near terminus (vaguely) with nowhere to go (2,1,5,3)
 40 Twisting? Caught out, offering bribes (6)
 41 Romanian province, kingdom old aviator discovers (8)
 42 Brown's out of practice (5)
 43 Ben is producing a dramatist (5)
 45 Peasant right by Russian river (5)

Down

- 2 University selected? Reportedly not fit (5)
 3 Period for vocal piece to pour forth heavenwards (5-4)
 4 Fur's said to be a seasonal decoration (4)
 5 Point to elude, unusually articulate (7)
 6 Papal accommodation? (8)
 7 Grave's pervaded by grand funeral song (5)
 8 Spent less on comedies, maybe (10)
 9 Favour shots involving edge (4,5)
 10 Spout, one time east in crude metal (5)
 11 Maintaining the constitution, you might say (9)
 12 Scrooge finds it a bore having drink sent up? (7)
 13 On reflection, it could be a skiing hazard! (4-9)
 14 Perhaps 24a, in old nightie, the gory ghost reformed? (5,2,3,3,5,1)
 19 Traditional contents of cabinets? (15,10,7)
 22 Flowering shrub doctors, in the end, pulled up (6)
 25 Tending to a lame fawn (7)
 26 They're certainly useful in jams or pickles (4-6)

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Concise

Across

- 1 The Bard's line in winter fashion (4,7,2,3,4)
 3 Rag dealer? (9)
 4 Cook (4)
 5 Hallmarks (7)
 6 Prevarication (8)
 7 African animal (5)
 8 Candie, for example? (5-5)
 9 Barely hit (anag) (9)
 10 A pickle (5)
 11 In force (9)
 12 Healthy sporting type (7)
 13 They house horses for hire (6,7)
 14 Carol opening (1,6,2,9)
 15 Evoking higher regard (6,2,4,10)
 23 Resident assistant doctor (5)
 25 Baffle (7)
 26 Indecisive (10)
 27 Milky foods (7)
 30 Eg. 24a (9)
 33 Out of earshot (9)
 34 Ancestor (8)
 36 Dire omens (anag) (9)
 37 Highly-glazed pottery (8)
 38 Innkeeper (4)
 39 Lullaby (6-4)
 44 Wooden shoe (4)
 46 Mary's song of praise (3,10)
 48 A symptom of the cold? (7)
 50 Tours (anag) (5)
 52 Job opportunity (7)
 53 Means of entry (6)
 56 Leaky house-plant (10)
 58 Ultimate unbearable factor (4,5)
 59 Important historical event (9)
 61 A mince-pie, say (9)
 62 To initiate (5,3)
 64 Witness (7)
 66 Capture again (7)
 69 Balthazar's mount, perhaps (5)
 71 Vaudeville acts (5)
 73 One of the Hollywood crowd? (5)
 74 The Wise Men (4)

Down

- 2 Biblical king (5)
 3 Rag dealer? (9)
 4 Cook (4)
 5 Hallmarks (7)
 6 Prevarication (8)
 7 African animal (5)
 8 Candie, for example? (5-5)
 9 Barely hit (anag) (9)
 10 A pickle (5)
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 73 One of the Hollywood crowd? (5)
 74 The Wise Men (4)

The first correct cryptic solution pulled from the sack will win the Oxford English Dictionary on CD-Rom, worth £580. Three cryptic numbers up will receive the Oxford Reference shelf and the Oxford Compendium on CD-Rom, both worth £79.99. The first correct concise solution picked will win a complete set of the Oxford Illustrated Dickens (worth £150). Five concise numbers up will receive paperback copies of 'A Christmas Carol'. Mark your envelopes: 'Concise Jumbo Crossword' or 'Cryptic Jumbo Crossword', and send them to: PO Box 7293, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5QQ. Entries to arrive by Wednesday 10 January. Solutions and winners' names will appear on Saturday 13 January.



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Boxing Day Television and Radio

Film choice

by James Rampton



Harrison Jones and the Last Crusade (2.10pm BBC1), the final part of Steven Spielberg's 'sipping' yarn, is greatly enhanced by a humorous performance from Sean Connery as Indy's (Harrison Ford) competitive father.

Charles Grodin is down as the lead in **Bastard** (6.00pm BBC1) – and he's certainly the most important human character – but the star of the show walks on four legs. Brian Hines' cuties comedy is a shaggy dog story *par excellence*.

Kes (9pm C4), the achingly sad version of Barry Hines's novel *A Kestrel for a Child*, about an introverted boy (David Bradley) yearning for a bird of prey, does not make for cheery viewing. But there is still much to admire in Ken

Loach's grainy photography.

Patriot Games (9.20pm BBC1) – Philip Noyce's adaption of the Tom Clancy spy thriller starring Harrison Ford, mean Sean Bean practices the badie he was to perfect in *Goldeneye*.

Robin Williams is on typically exuberant form as an inspirational teacher, urging his pupils to seize the day in **Dead Poets Society** (11.10pm ITV). Peter Weir's rather overwrought drama centres on the effect his teachings have on a group of impressionable teenagers.

John Cleese gets to smash up a phonebox in Pawley's frustration for **Clockwise** (11.25pm BBC1). In Christopher Morahan's frenetic comedy, he plays a faddish headmaster, delayed on his way to address a conference in Norwich.

Faust (11.55pm BBC2) is Czech animation, but don't let that put you off. This reading of the Goethe legend is directed by Jan Svankmajer, an undisputed master of surrealistic story-telling.

Television choice

by Gerard Gilbert

The Middle Ages is the place to be today. **Cadfael** (8.30pm ITV) has a feature-length mystery for Derek Jacobi's 12th-century sleuthing monk. The creation of Ellis Peters, who died earlier this year, Brother Cadfael investigates when a nun is raped, murdered and encased in a block of ice. Despite the best efforts of the heritage industry, the British countryside was not deemed suitably medieval, so Hungary stands in for Shropshire. Quite what this says for three decades of socialist state planning is a different matter.

Screen Two: The Hour of the Pig (10pm BBC2) is supposed to be set in medieval Abbeville in Flanders, although the countryside looks distinctly Midi. Leslie Megarry's enjoyable

film, which has already had a brief cinematic run, looks at the historical practice of trying animals in courts of law as if they were human. Not convinced? Then I'll just say two words: Colin Firth. Of 'Darcy'-breaches plays an idealistic Parisian lawyer who has to defend a pig charged with murder.

The cultural highlights of the day are choreographer Mark Morris's adaptation of Henry Purcell's opera **Dido and Aeneas** (3.15pm C4), a performance combining opera and dance. But if you like your dance pure, then there's a rare chance to catch the extraordinary French dancer Sylvie Guillem, in the imaginatively titled **Sylvie Guillem** (7.35pm BBC2). The point of this three-part series, which continues



Middle-age sleuthing in *Cadfael*

tomorrow, is for Guillem and a guest choreographer to try and make dance more televisual. In the first and best of the three, the Swedish choreographer Mats Ek helps Guillem explore the relationship between man and woman.

BBC1

- 7.00 Children's BBC: Tales of the Tooth Fairies (5077220). 7.05 The Greedyhaus Gang (5076591). 7.10 The Snow Queen (2305171). 7.35 Opus and Bill (7229751). 8.00 Fireman Sam (5849303). 8.20 Playdays (6994539). 8.40 White Christmas (3510775). 9.10 Peter Pan and the Pirates (5845978). 9.30 The Legend of Prince Valiant (1344442). 9.55 Eek the Cat (4978152). 10.20 Record Breakers (248607).
- 10.45 **Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines** (Ken Darvill 1965 UK). Much-loved comedyнят set in 1910, in which the likes of James Fox and Eric Sykes try to fly from London to Paris in the fastest time (4260504). * 12.50 News, Weather (7296804). * 12.55 Local News, Weather (12967355). 1.00 Neighbours (S) (6999278). * 1.20 The Two Ronnies, Their Christmas Special from 1987, featuring Elton John and Charlton Heston (R) (5802268). * 2.10 **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade** (Steven Spielberg 1989 US). The comic relationship between Harrison Ford and Sean Connery, as his father, is the best thing about the otherwise mediocre, seen-it-before second sequel. River Phoenix plays the young Indy (S) (323238).
- 4.10 Disney Time. **Bouncy Michaela Strachan** introduces the clips from Norway (S) (5318797). 4.50 Final Score. Sports results (701688). 5.15 News, Weather (317513). 5.25 Local News, Weather (6246336). 5.30 Carbon (938510). 5.40 Neighbours (R) (S) (661201). * 6.05 **Beethoven** (Brian Levant 1992 US). American family discovers a comedy St Bernard and adopts it. With the perennially underrated Charles Grodin (8752572). *
- 7.30 **EastEnders**. Pat and Pauline grieve (S) (249). * 8.00 Goodnight Sweetheart. Seasonal slice of this diverting time-travel sitcom (098862).
- 8.50 **The Thin Blue Line**: Comedy PC Grim chases some dangerous carol singers (S) (429133). * 9.20 **Patriot Games** (Philip Noyce 1992 US). Ho-hum, highly implausible yarn with CIA specialist Harrison Ford coming out of retirement to protect his family from Sean Bean's Irish accent and his violent, terrorist ways (S) (7376978). * 11.10 News, Weather (729404). * 11.25 **Clockwise** (Christopher Morahan 1986 UK). Excellent, well-observed comedy in which punctuality-obsessed headmaster John Cleese comes to pieces in a desperate bid to address a headmasters' conference (S) (187753). * 1.00 Lisa Stansfield in Concert (22553). 2.00 Weather (8547195). To 2.05am.

BBC2

- 7.00 **City Lights** (Charlie Chaplin 1931 US). Charlie Chaplin classic in which he plays a tramp who tries to raise money for an operation to help a blind flower girl (189220).
- 8.25 **Madame Saks** (1974 US). Thoroughly embarrassing musical with slatsomething Lucille Ball squirming her way through the songs as a 'free-spirited' aunt transforming everyone's lives. A camp classic (52482317). *
- 10.30 **The Voyages of Charles Darwin** (R) (18571). 11.30 **Celebrity Marmite** (Michael Hordern revealed through his knick-knacks) (4223355). *
- 11.45 **The Adventures of Quentin Durward** (Richard Thorpe 1955 UK). Robert Taylor swashbuckles his way through 15th-century Burgundy (81554713).
- 1.20 **Anne Frank Remembered**. Riveting, thoroughly moving documentary about the young Dutch wartime diary-keeper – deserved winner of a recent International Emmy (R) (95352201). *
- 3.20 **My Fair Lady** (George Cukor 1964 US). Overlong but otherwise fine version of the Lerner and Loewe musical, with Audrey Hepburn perhaps a tad refined as Eliza, and Rex Harrison world-weary as Professor Higgins (44613751). *
- 6.05 **The Glurkies**. Tribute to the Nepalese soldiers who fight for Britain (S) (126510). *
- 7.05 **Frida and Prejudice** From Page to Screen (R) (420317). *
- 7.35 **Sylvie Guillem**. New three-part series in which the French dancer invites dancers and choreographers to explore new ways of bringing dance to the screen. Tonight: Mats Ek (S) (137355).
- 8.00 **The Abbey** with Alan Bennett. 2/3: Westminster Abbey according to Alan Bennett (S) (910572). *
- 8.55 **Close Up**. Robert McKee on Erich Von Stroheim's *Greed* (S) (695591). *
- 9.00 **A to Z of AT&T R** is for Repeat (R) (25355). 9.20 **Victoria Wood** as Seen on TV Special. From 1987 (R) (958442). *
- 10.00 **Screen Two: The Hour of the Pig**. Based on true cases from rural medieval France, where animals were considered capable of committing crimes and tried as such. Colin Firth plays an idealistic Parisian lawyer who finds himself defending a pig (S) (879959). *
- 11.55 **Faust** (Jan Svankmajer 1994 CZ/UK/Fr). Specially commissioned by the BBC from the great Czech animator, this beautiful, haunting telling of the Faust legend uses a puppet/live-action mix (S) (769607). *
- 1.30 **The Body Snatcher** (Robert Wise 1945 US). Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi go grave-robbing in 1800s Edinburgh (8635474). *
- 1.00 Lisa Stansfield in Concert (22553). 2.00 Weather (5150973). To 2.45am.

ITV/London

- 6.00 **GMTV** (8147404). 9.25 **Mele's Christmas**. Animation adapted from one chapter from *The Wind in the Willows* and featuring the voices of Richard Briers, Peter Davison and Imelda Staunton (R) (S) (8225404).
- 9.55 **Talespin** (S) (4963220).
- 10.20 **The Forgotten Toys**. Bob Hoskins and Joanna Lumley voice an animation about two toys in search of children to love them (1286305).
- 10.50 **The Snow Queen**. Animated Hans Christian Andersen, based on Hellen Mirren, Hugh Laurie and David Jason (S) (7224930).
- 12.20 **News, Weather** (818513). *
- 12.30 **Emmerdale** (R) (760465). *
- 1.00 **Take That at Earl's Court**. Part two of the boys' recent London concerts (1960862). *
- 2.05 **Return of the Pink Panther** (Blake Edwards 1975 UK). Edwards and Seller re-united to truthful effect in a fairly amusing Inspector Clouseau outing (42662775). *
- 4.10 **Her Alibi** (Bruce Beresford 1989 US). You might need an alibi if caught watching this stale romantic comedy in which mystery writer Tom Selleck (implausibility number one) tries to prove the innocence of a mysterious foreign woman (6942020).
- 5.00 **News, Weather** (849133). *
- 6.00 **Goldeneye**. The Secret Files. Behind the scenes, yet again (8465404). *
- 7.00 **Christmas in Emmerdale** (7171). *
- 8.00 **Michael Barrymore's My Kind of People** (S) (1046). *
- 8.30 **Cadfael**. Derek Jacobi returns as the sleuthing 12th-century monk – investigating the rape, murder and encasement in ice of a nun (31336). *
- 10.00 **The Beatles Anthology**. The Beatles meet the Maharishi, and Brian Epstein dies (S) (6442). *
- 11.10 **Dead Poets Society** (Peter Weir 1989 US). It's 1959, and unorthodox teacher Robin Williams arrives at a stuffy New England school and inspires the pupils. A dazzling performance by Williams is slowly sidelined by the plot (S) (60655404).
- 1.35 **Midnight Crossing** (Roger Holberg 1988 US). Convoluted yarn in which Daniel J Travanti plays blind wife Fay Dunaway on holiday to a Caribbean island in order to retrieve some stolen money (S) (622973).
- 3.20 **Tricks of the Trade** (Jack Bender 1988 US). When her husband is murdered, a wife goes looking for his mistress (535669).
- 5.00 **It's Xmas, It's Number One**. To 5.55am.

Channel 4

- 6.40 **Ulysses** (1) (R) (1679510). 7.05 **The Adventures of T-Rex** (2373572). 7.30 **Little Dracula** (R) (33971). 8.00 **The Big Breakfast**. With footballer Jamie Redknapp (75084).
- 10.00 **The Morning Line**. Today's horse-racing previewed (S) (1187751). 10.25 **Babylon 5** (R) (S) (3038249). *
- 11.20 **California Dreams** (R) (4875671). 11.45 **Biker Mice from Mars** (2101220). 12.10 **Super Mario Brothers** (3833794). 12.20 **Dennis** (R) (783959).
- 12.30 **Channel 4 Racing from Kempton**. The King George VI Tripleprint Chase is the day's big race at 2.20pm, and there's coverage of the 1.25, 1.15, 1.45 and 2.50 races (S) (32697317).
- 3.15 **Did and Aeneas**. Purcell's opera is staged with a novel mixture of music and dance (choreographed by Mark Morris). Singers include Jennifer Lane and Russell Braun, accompanied by the baroque orchestra, *Tafelmusik* (794797).
- 4.15 **The World of Jim Henson**. Profiler of the puppeteer behind *The Muppets* (S) (28357341). *
- 5.55 **News Summary, Weather** (855794). *
- 6.00 **Absolutely Xmas Animals**. Danni Behr discovers what Christmas is like for dogs, by visiting the country's largest dog shelter (821521).
- 6.45 **No Women** (David Attenborough 1993 Aus). Charming drama about a young girl from the Australian outback who relocates to Sydney when her parents' sheep farm goes bust, and finds her bearing with the help of another outsider – a young Vietnamese refugee (73323539).
- 8.30 **Brookside**. Rosie's luck runs out (S) (1423). *
- 9.00 **Film** **Ken Loach** (Ken Loach 1969 UK). Loach's first film still stands as one of his best – a low-key adaptation of Barry Hines's novel about a boy who finds solace from his harsh environment and bullying schoolmates and family by training a kestrel. Touching, truthful performances are extracted from the youngsters, and 14-year-old David Baffin in particular. With Lynn Perrie, Colin Welland and Brian Glover (45589713).
- 11.05 Just for Laughs (889355). *
- 11.35 Whose Line Is It Anyway? (478171).
- 12.05 American Football (7813805).
- 1.20 **Street with No Name** (Williams Keighley 1948) FBI agent Mark Stevens infiltrates a vicious criminal gang headed by Richard Widmark, in this engrossing thriller (690440).
- 3.00 **Rawhide** (64350).
- 4.00 **The World of Hammer** (R) (9096314). To 4.25am.

- ANGLA 6.00am **GMTV** (8147404). 9.25 **Mole's Christmas** (8225404). 9.55 **Talespin** (4963220). 10.20 **The Forgotten Toys** (1286305). 10.50 **TV** **The Snow Queen** (7224930). 12.20pm **News & Weather** (818517). 12.30 **Emmerdale** (7171). 1.00 **Take That at Earl's Court** (1960862). 2.05 **Film: Return of the Pink Panther** (42662775). 4.10 **Film: Her Alibi** (5402030). 5.50 **News** (849133). 6.00 **Goldeneye**. The Secret Files (84655404). 7.00 **Michael Barrymore's My Kind of People** (1046). 8.30 **Cadfael** (31336). 10.00 **The Beatles Anthology** (5442). 11.00 **Film: Dead Poets Society** (60655404). 1.35am **Film: The Sign of Four** (622973). 3.20am **The Chart Show** (719714). 4.15am **On the Live Side** (781761). 4.45-5.55am **Film: Clancy Street Boys** (3189089).
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- WESTONBIRT As London
- TYNE TEEV/TYORKSHIRE As London
- CENTRAL As London
- RTV As London except: 12.30-1.00pm **The Munsters** Today (76046).
- 54C As C except: 12.00noon **Six Methim** (58152). 12.30pm **Channel 4 Racing** (32697317). 3.15pm **Miracle on 34th Street** (93067597). 5.00 **Sinatra** (2533). 6.00 **Newyddion** (5474894). 6.10 5pm **Flippin' Yn Gwyddon Nadolig** (138539). 6.40 5pm **Film: Fliss 23355**. 7.00 **Cafe Gwlad** (876423). 7.45 **Paventol Yn Llangollen** (996084). 8.45 **Newyddion** (779775). 9.00 **Y Mapŵr** (9448987). 10.50 **Broedol** (222065). 11.20 **Absolutely Amas Animals** (639930). 12.05 **2.00am American Football** (7813803).

Radio



- Radio 1 6.00am **Simon Mayo with PJ and Duncan** (Nicky Campbell). 6.00am **Keith Richards** (3.00 Dave Pearce 7.00 Evening Session). 9.00 **Star Review** (Bruce Dickinson 10.00 Bon Jovi Live at Wembley 12.00 **Mark Tonderai**). 4.00-8.00am **Clare Sturgess**
- Radio 2 6.00am **Roger Royle** 7.30 **Wake Up to Wogan** 9.30 **Ken Bruce** 12.00 **Ginger Rogers** 1.00 **That's Life** 3.00 **Ed Stewart** 5.00 **Tom Clancy** 6.00 **Dame Judi Dench** Presents Music on **Friday** 8.30 **Smooth Radio** 9.00 **Star Review** (Bruce Dickinson 10.00 **John Peel** 10.00 **Chris Rea** 11.00 **Elton John** 12.00 **Mark Tonderai**

staying in

Christmas Day Television and Radio

Film choice
by James Rampton



More Spielberg flies onto our screens in the shape of *Hook* (4.30pm BBC1), his schmaltzy reading of JM Barrie's *Peter Pan* (Ruth Williams). Julia Roberts is as insubstantial as her character, Tinkerbell, but Dustin Hoffman, several miles over the top in his title role, will have you hissing and booing in the best pantomime tradition.

Playing in the "Bastard Christmas" season, *Turtle Diary* (7pm C4) reminds us what a loss to acting Glenda Jackson's election as an MP was. She plays a lonely middle-aged woman who shares an interest with Ben Kingsley in liberating giant turtles from a zoo. Screenwriter Harold Pinter pops up as Man in Bookshop.

In *Sister Act* (8pm ITV), Whoopi Goldberg has a whale of a time as a

streetwise woman placed by the police in a numery for her own protection after witnessing a murder by her boyfriend (Hollywood's rent-a-hitman, Harvey Keitel). Maggie Smith earns some easy money playing the Mother Superior.

Showing in the "BBC 100" series,

Farewell My Concubine (10pm BBC2) comes with the cachet of having twice been banned by the Chinese authorities. It deals with the sexual confusion experienced by Douzi (Leslie Cheung) against a backdrop of political turmoil.

There was something of a storm when Sky's saucy poster advertising *Indecent Proposal* (10.10pm BBC1) was pulled. Sadly, Adrian Lyne's glossy film about whether Demi Moore will sleep with Robert Redford for a million dollars offers little that's as provocative.

In *Scenes from a Mall* (11pm ITV), Paul Mazursky's slick drama, Woody Allen plays a sports lawyer whose marriage to a psychotherapist (Bette Midler) begins to fray at the edges on a Christmas shopping trip to a Beverly Hills mall.

Television choice
by Gerard Gilbert



The rumour is, of course, that Victor Meldrew puts his other foot in the grave in this year's seasonal special of *One Foot in the Grave* (9pm BBC1) – and BBC have cleverly stoked the rumour by withholding all preview cast-sheets of the episode. The last time they did this was over Princess Diana's *Panorama* confessional.

The odd shopping list or betting slip aside, England, My England (9.05pm C4) is the last thing written by John Osborne. This imaginative, multi-layered tale of composer Henry Purcell and actress Barbara Windsor and Gloster Abbey, co-written by Charles Wood but carrying all the hallmarks of its director, Tony Palmer, contains some of the most bizarre casting this side of panto, including former *EastEnders* barmaid

Letitia Dean, Antonia Sanchez and, as Purcell, boyish singer Michael Ball. Simon Callow plays Charles II and an actor called Charles. Yet, it's not my dear, but bear with it. It's all I had.

The *Abbey* (9pm BBC2) is a very funny – in an understated, Alan Bennett sort of way – newseries in which Robert Bathurst arrives at Westminster Abbey, commenting upon the Poet's Corner, the Corporation of Clergy and so forth, while the churchgoers eavesdrop on the other visitors to the Queen's parish church. The *Abbey*, Gladstone being eulogised and Mrs. de beaumis Japanese tourist is one of the comedy high spots of the season.

A repeat, I know, but many of you might have missed writer Nick Dear

BBC 1

6.00 Children's BBC: *Puddington Peas*. 6.05 *Bump's Christmas Story*. 6.15 *Moomin*. 6.40 *White Christmas*. 7.10 *Playdays*. 7.30 *PJ's Unfunny/Bunny Christmas*. 7.55 *McGee and Me*. 8.15 *The Flintstones*. 9.25 *Movie Game*.

10.00 *Christmas Day in the Morning*. Carols, readings and prayers from Beauvoir. Guests include Sir Harry Secombe, Ruth Madoc and Casually's Clive Mantle (S1/233455).

10.55 **Film** *The Neverending Story* (Wolfgang Petersen 1984 Ger). Enticing fairy tale about a lonely boy who enters an alternative world through a story book (733456).

12.25 **Neighbours** (S1/5075729).

12.50 **News, Weather** (1206-2121).

12.55 **Top of the Pops**. Bloop and Jack Dee present the usual look-book at 1995, and unveil the Christmas number one (S1/125859).

1.55 **Only Fools and Horses**: Christmas Special from 1992 (R) (S1/4125816).

3.00 **The Queen**. Her message to the Commonwealth (S1/7402331).

3.10 **Noel's Christmas Presents**, Noel Edmonds, Cliff Richard, Robbie Williams and more than 100 children. Haven't you got anything better to do? (S1/1255-157).

4.20 **News, Weather** (88850191).

4.30 **Film** *Hook* (Steven Spielberg 1991 US). Director's cut version of the Peter Pan story with peculiar "Iron John" undertones. The kids will be baffled. Robin Williams is the grown-up Peter, whose two children are kidnapped by Dustin Hoffman's Captain Hook (S1/53551106).

6.45 **Auntie's Brand New Bloomers** (S1/6508165).

7.30 **EastEnders**. First of two visits (S1/8001).

8.00 **Keeping Up Appearances**. Hyacinth gets to grips with a mobile phone (S1/5361).

8.30 **EastEnders**. Second slice of Christmas grief, and Pauline receives a distressing call from the prison (S1/5395).

9.00 **One Foot in the Grave**. Or is it two? (S1/7564).

10.00 **News, Weather** (S1/3033).

10.10 **Indecent Proposal** (Adrian Lyne 1993 US). Robert Redford proves he has more money than taste by offering \$1 million to sleep with Demi Moore. But can Demi's marriage to Woody Harrelson survive such trauma? High-concept, low-involvement thrills (S1/5383).

12.00 **I Hate Christmas**. Poetic meditation on the spirit of Christmas (5108572).

12.05 **The Greatest Music Party in the World**. Recorded last month at the NEC Birmingham, with Rod Stewart, David Bowie, Echobelly and Alanis Morissette (S1/5809404).

1.35 **Weather** (12787336). To 1.40am.

BBC 2

7.05 **Christmas with Cliff** (R) (S1/5338903).

7.45 **Film** *A Christmas Carol* (Edwin L Marin 1938 US). Reginald Owen plays Scrooge in this unexpected version of Dickens's tale (936509).

8.50 **Film** *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Richard Fleischer 1954 US). A fine cast – Kirk Douglas, James Mason (as Captain Nemo) and Peter Lorre – enlivens this handsome Disney version of the Jules Verne story (50117038).

10.55 **Top Gear RAC Rally Special** (S1/157583).

11.40 **Treasures in Trust**. The National Trust's 10th anniversary, celebrated in uncritical style (R) (S1/685477).

12.55 **The Hills Are Alive: The Sound of Music Phenomenon**. An exploration of the enduring appeal of *The Sound of Music* (3347187).

1.35 **Victory Stiffs**. People who took part in VE Day, 1945, captured on camera (96/47800).

1.55 **Memories and Celebrations**. 50th anniversary commemorations of VE and VJ Days (4123458).

3.00 **Trick on Two**. Magicians reveal their trade secrets (P) (S1/203231).

3.10 **La Bohème**. Australian Opera version of Puccini's love story, set in 1950s Paris (S1/237951).

5.05 **Today's the Day Christmas Special** (2140767).

5.35 **Some Enchanted Evening**. Julie Andrews introduces a tribute to lyricist Oscar Hammerstein (S1/6827632).

7.00 **Screen Two: Persuasion**. Another chance to see Roger Michell's superb screen version of Jane Austen's classic – and to compare it (it's better) to *Price and Prejudice* (R) (S1/2285477).

8.40 **Close Up**. Richard Attorborough on a scene from Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (S1/752564).

8.50 **The Queen**. Her Christmas message to the Commonwealth (R) (S1/743816).

9.00 **The Abbey with Alan Bennett**. The first in an excellent series in which Alan Bennett proves a tart guide to Westminster Abbey, beginning by looking at the building's close association with royalty (S1/5106).

10.00 **Film** *Farewell My Concubine* (Chen Kaige 1993 Hong Kong/China). Bold, sweeping and intelligent tale of two Peking Opera actors over 50 years of China's recent history (S1/1858748).

12.30 **Rowan and Martin's Laugh In – 25th Anniversary Special**. Compilation includes snippets of guests Cher, Peter Sellers, Tony Curtis, Michael Caine and Richard Nixon (R) (S1/29084).

1.30 **Film** *A Night at the Opera* (Sam Wood 1935 US). "You big bully, why aren't you hitting that little bully?" and other classic lines, as the Marx Brothers meet Margaret Dumont and her cultured chums (48930). To 3.00am.

ITV/London

6.00 **GMTV**. News. 6.05 Special Feature. 7.00 News. 7.05 *Barney*. 7.30 *Tom & Jerry Kids*. 8.00 *Galaxy High*. 8.30 *Starla and the Jewel Riders*. 8.55 *Power Rangers*.

9.25 **Christmas Morning Worship**. Roman Catholic Mass from Arundel Cathedral in Sussex (6073564).

10.25 **The Little Engine That Could**. Animation (S) (2355908).

11.00 **Cars Bunnies** (3632).

11.30 **Film** *Herbie Rides Again* (Robert Stevenson 1974 US). The friendly Volkswagen takes on property developers in *Love Bug* sequel (81661816).

1.05 **Disney Cartoon** (R) (48958767).

1.15 **News, Weather** (25733564).

1.25 **Coronation Street** (R) (44120309).

1.55 **Tales That at Earl's Court**. First of a two-part recording of the boys' London concerts from earlier this year (4143212).

3.00 **The Queen** (S) (5602859).

3.10 **Film** *Ghostsbusters II* (Ivan Reitman 1999 US). Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Sigourney Weaver and Rick Moranis reassemble for bigger effects and predictable laughs (S1/99157564).

5.00 **News, Weather** (6885125).

5.05 **The Wind in the Willows**. Lavish animated version of Kenneth Grahame's tale, featuring the voices of Alan Bennett (Mole), Michael Palin (Rat), Michael Gambon (Badger) and Rik Mayall (Toad) (S) (7497729).

5.30 **Christmas in Coronation Street**. Steve McDonald and the case of the stolen whisky (24748).

7.30 **Robson and Jerome Christmas Special**. Say no more (496).

8.00 **Film** *Sister Act* (Emile Ardolino 1992 US). Good-natured, undemanding comedy, with murder witness Whoopi Goldberg taking refuge in an inner-city nunnery and turning the sisters on (72310545).

9.55 **News, Weather** (984477).

10.00 **Outside Edge**. Christmas special for the cricketing sitcom. The boys and their wives go on a cricketing trip to Corfu (S1/2019).

11.00 **Film** *Scenes from a Matt* (Paul Mazursky 1990 US). Wacky, dyspeptic comedy in which Woody Allen and Bette Midler's marriage falls apart while they're not shopping (S) (800545).

12.35 **Film** *Trenchcoat* (Michael Tuchner 1983 US). Mystery author Marget Kidder finds herself in a real-life adventure (S1/289620).

2.15 **Film** *Carbuche* (Philippe de Broca 1962 Fr/Ft). Jean-Paul Belmondo swashbuckles through 18th-century France (37378). To 4.15am.

Channel 4

6.45 **Ulysses 31** (R) (7016699).

7.05 **The Adventures of Robin Hood** (4717309).

7.35 **Little Dracula** (R) (7325309).

8.00 **The Big Breakfast**. Christmas Special with Eternals, Billy Crystal, Barbara Windsor and Gloria Gaynor (67019).

10.00 **Saved by the Bell** (R) (337039).

10.25 **Showtime: Blair in Concert**. Recorded at Alexandra Palace (R) (2397274).

11.25 **A Christmas Carol**. Oscar-winning animated version, with the voices of Michael Redgrave, Alastair Sim and Michael Hordern (7107477).

11.55 **Fairy Cinders**. Animated Special with a male Cinderella and voiced by Jennifer Saunders, Jonathan Ross and Lenny Henry (R) (7685361).

12.25 **Beauty** (S228458).

12.35 **Christian Rose Special**. Ecstatic young Christians get in the groove (7601767).

1.25 **Film** *Elenya* (Steve Gough 1992 UK). Pascale Delafour plays a Welsh girl with Italian parents, feeling ostracised in the Valleys of World War Two, who meets a young, crash-landed German airman (3618554).

3.00 **The Alternative Christmas Message**. Bridget Bardot talks on behalf of the animals (3312106).

3.15 **Heroes of Comedy**. Being Tony Hancock, Frankie Howard, Benny Hill, Les Dawson, Morecambe and Wise and Paul Merton (R) (4171774).

5.45 **Coping with Christmas** (822749).

6.30 **The Queen** (S) (268835).

6.30 **The Showman**. *It's Christmas on-Cartoon*. A must be Raymond Briggs (654).

7.00 **Film** *Terrie Dally John Inver* (1985 UK). Comedy middle-aged Ben Kingsley and Glenda Jackson join forces to liberate turtles from a zoo. Harold Pinter wrote the script (5383925).

8.45 **The Other Christmas Story**. Michael Starke, Sibbed in Brookside, with an alternative Christmas tale (499458).

9.05 **England, My England**. John Osborne's last screenplay, co-written with Charles Wood, and directed by Tony Palmer in his inimitable style, marking the 20th anniversary of Henry Purcell's death (S) (93856380).

12.00 **Film** *How to Steal a Million* (William Wyler 1966 US). High Society heist movie set in the Paris art world, with Audrey Hepburn hiring detective Peter O'Toole to steal his father's forged Cézanne Venus (61275133).

2.20 **Film** *Sentimental Journey* (Walter Lang 1946 US). Terminal ill actress Maureen O'Hara adopts a young orphan as a companion for her husband. Not sure it would be allowed these days (577336).

4.00 **Rawhide** (932572). To 4.55am.

ITV/Regions

ANGLA
As London

TYNE TEE/ORKNEY
As London

CENTRAL
As London

NW
As London

MERSEY
As London

WESTCOUNTRY
As London

S4C

As C4 except 7.05am *The Adventures of T-Rex* (4717309); 10.00 *Saved by the Bell* (337039); 10.25 *Little House on the Prairie* (2381274); 11.55 *Creature Comforts* (6451061); 12.00 *Father Christmas* (714771); 12.30 *Carlyle Nadig* (33903); 1.00 *Sgt. Weather* (7572816); 1.30 *Film: How Red?* (73244635); 3.30 *Her Majesty the Queen's Christmas Message* (3491922); 3.45 *Pumpkin Y-Den* (Nath Polley Y-Dale) (694038); 5.00 *Pumpkin Y-Den*; *Rawhead & Bloody Rotten* (6614361); 9.05 *Nadig Bryn Terfel* (278125); 10.05 *Dame Edna's Christmas Experience* (220578); 11.10 *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* (572019); 11.40-1.30am *Film: Kill Me Again*. John Dahl's homage to film noir. Joanne Whalley Kumar is a femme fatale who pays a "down-on-his-luck private eye" (Val Kilmer) to take her death after she double-crosses her Mafia boss lover. Also starring Michael Madson and Jonathan Gries (713038).

Radio

Choice

Radio 1
9.50-10.30am *Bill*.
7.00am *Clive Warren* 10.00 *Simon Mayo's Classic Years* 12.00 *Kevin Greening* 2.00 *Soul on Sunday* 4.00 *UK Top 40* 7.00 *REM Live at the Bowl* 11.00 *Andy Kershaw* 1.00 *Mark Tonderai* 4.00-6.30am *Dave Pearce*

Radio 2
9.50-10.30am *Don Maclean* 9.05 *Chris Sawtell* 10.30 *Hayes on Sunday* 12.00 *Trevor May Family Forum* 1.00 *Dick Barton – Special Agent* 1.30 *The Biffy Cotton Band Show* 2.00 *Round the Horne* 2.30 *Take It from Here* 3.00 *Music While You Work* 3.30 *Move-Go- Round* 4.00 *A Tenor Sang* 4.30 *Sing Something Simple* 5.00 *Charlie Chester* 7.00 *Richard Baker* 8.30 *Sunday Hall Hour* 9.00 *Alan Heath* 10.00 *Rich Man, Poor Man* 12.05 *Steve Madden* 3.00-6.00am *Alex Lester*

Radio 3
6.30-7.30am *Bill*.
6.30am *Open University*.
6.35 *Weather*.
7.00 *Sacred and Profane*.
8.55 *Choice of Three*.

7.00 Prom News 1995.
7.30 BBC Proms 1995. Live from the Royal Albert Hall. Choir of New College Oxford. King's Consort. Choral Royal. King's Consort. My Fair Lady. *Orpheus*. *Jeremiah Clarke*. *Orlando*. *Purcell's Queen*. *My Fair Lady*. *Karen Ringer* plays the composer Albert Ketèbel. 1.45 *The Sunday Concert*. BBC Philharmonic/Edward Downes. Wagner: *Overture: Rienzi*. *Dvořák: Symphony No 9 in E Minor*. 2.50 *Spirit of the Age*. Davitt Morrissey plays talk about French keyboard music of the 17th century. 3.50 *Brindisi's Beethoven*. Alfred Brendel (piano). Beethoven: *Sonata in G, Op. 2*; *Sonata in F sharp, Op. 78*; *Sonata in D, Op. 28*. (Interval

staying in



Film choice

by James Rampton

For those many people unable to get tickets for the stage revival, Carol Reed's film version of Oliver (10.15am BBC1) might provide some compensation in this multi-Oscar-winning interpretation of the Lionel Bart musical. Ron Moody makes for a memorable Fagin while Mark Lester (now, I believe, an osteopath) is suitably cute as the boy who dares to ask for more.

The remake of *Miracle on 34th Street* (2pm C4), with Richard Attenborough, may be selling like hot pies in the video stores, but it's not a patch on the original. George Seaton's 1947 classic stars Edmund Gwenn as a department-store Santa claiming to be the Real McCoy.



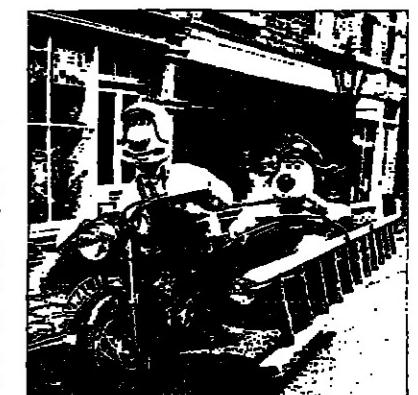
Grace Kelly comes over all claustrophobic

A Bond film has become as traditional as turkey at Christmas. This year's is *The Spy Who Loved Me* (3.40pm ITV), in which Roger Moore takes on the metal-toothed Jaws (Richard Kiel), the best baddie this side of *Goldfinger's* Oddjob.

Spielberg may be accused of sentimentality, but he certainly knows how to wow children, as delightfully proven by *ET the Extra-Terrestrial* (3.40pm BBC1).

Groucho Marx once remarked: "I've been around so long I can remember Doris Day before she was a virgin." Day projects that familiar sense of rectitude to pleasing effect in *Movie Over, Darling* (8.45pm C4), where she plays a woman presumed dead in a plane crash, who reappears to discover her husband (James Garner) about to marry another woman.

In *Rear Window* (12.50am BBC1), James Stewart and Grace Kelly investigate suspicious goings-on at a neighbour's. Stewart's immobility only adds to the feeling of claustrophobic intensity.



Wallace and Gromit speed into our hearts

If the idea of Ken Russell's *Treasure Island* (7.30pm C4) has you rushing to turn the turkey in the oven, fear not. This is a jaunty reading of Robert Louis Stevenson complete with a female Long "Jane" Silver.

ITV/Regions

BBC1

7.30 *The Pink Panther* (Blake Edwards 1964 UK). Peter Sellers niftily steals this romantic comedy from beneath the noses of its ostensible stars, David Niven and Capucine, as the bumbling Inspector Clouseau (5.75/8.15C4). *

9.25 *News, Weather* (5.25/9.27C4). *

9.30 *Promise of His Glory* (S) (6.60/8.05C4). *

10.15 *Oliver!* (Carol Reed 1968 UK). Critics hammer on about how Lionel Bart's musical draws Dickens's teeth, forgetting that a Dickens could be sentimental as the next one, and b) he would probably have thoroughly approved of Reed's lively enriching of Bart's stage musical, with Ron Moody as Fagin, Oliver Reed as Bill Sikes, and Mark Lester as Oliver (17.25/22.31C4). *

12.35 *A Flintstone Family Christmas* (20.57/20.58C4). *

1.00 *News, Weather* (4.45/8.09C4). *

1.15 *Noel's Christmas Past* (S) (3.10/5.21C4). *

2.15 *EastEnders* (S) (8.27/4.72C4). *

3.40 *ET the Extra-Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg 1982 US). Spielberg's entrancing fantasy about a lonely boy (Henry Thomas) who befriends a stranded alien (S) (2.72/25C4). *

5.30 *Antiques Roadshow - the Next Generation*. The young people's roadshow at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (S) (6.10/7.05C4). *

6.15 *News, Weather* (8.21/2.27C4). *

6.30 *Local News, Weather* (4.85/7.86C4). *

6.35 *Christmas with Cliff*. Sir Cliff Richard choppers in to a country estate to celebrate Christmas with some Surrey primary-school children (5.42/8.11C4). *

7.15 *Last of the Summer Wine* (3.22/3.27C4). *

8.15 *Zootopia*. Children can be relied upon to buy the turkey? (S) (6.98/7.86C4). *

8.45 *P G Wodehouse's Heavy Weather*. Peter O'Toole is a touch ectomorphic in build for my idea of Lord Emsworth, the eccentric, pig-loving owner of Blandings Castle, but at least this version does without those perennial casting nightmares, Jeeves and Wooster. It's the usual Wodehouse tale of a young scion of the gentry mixed up with chorus girls and aunts (5.04/12.09C4). *

10.20 *News, Weather* (1.36/8.89C4). *

10.35 *The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show* (1975). Gordon Jackson, Diana Rigg and Paul's People were the guests (R) (2.32/3.10C4). *

11.40 *The First Communion of Christmas*. Live from Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire (S) (3.4/8.73C4). *

12.50 *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock 1954 US). Confined to a wheelchair after an accident, news photographer James Stewart begins to spy on his neighbours in Hitchcock's brilliant and self-revealing meditation on voyeurism. Grace Kelly plays Stewart's girlfriend (4.65/4.61C4). *

2.40 *Weather* (5.99/1.45C4). To 2.45am.

BBC2

7.30 *Children's BBC: William's Wish Wellingtons*. 7.35 *The Foxy Christmas Story*. 7.45 *Spot's Magical Christmas*. 8.10 *Playdays*. 8.30 *Briza*. 8.45 *Jackson*. 9.10 *The Animals of Farthing Wood*. 9.35 *A Weekend Christmas*. 10.05 *Blue Peter*. 10.30 *Grange Hill*. 10.55 *The Queen's Nose*. 11.20 *Weekend Break*. 11.40 *Star Trek*. **12.30** *Fantasy Football League* (5.02C4). **1.00** *Dreaming of Ajax*. Gary Lineker ponders the success of European champions, Ajax FC (R) (S) (5.92/6.18C4). **1.45** *The O-Zone* (R) (S) (7.38/7.61C4). **1.55** *Bill Donovan's Reef* (John Ford 1963 US). Ford's underrated comedy - his last twinning with John Wayne - about three American sailors (Wayne, Lee Marvin and Jack Warden) who settle down on a South Sea island at the close of the Second World War (8.76/9.27C4). **3.40** *The Making of the Trials of Life* (R) (9.40/8.92C4). **4.30** *Christmas in Vienna* (1995). Plácido Domingo and José Carreras are joined by Natalie Cole for a musical celebration of Christmas (S) (5.23/31C4). **5.30** *Space Precinct* (S) (3.42/2.27C4). **6.15** *Wallace and Gromit in A Close Shave*. Oscar-winning animator Nick Park's latest chapter (S) (3.57/9.27C4). **6.45** *Rancho the Red Deer*. Wildlife film about a red deer from the Scottish Highlands (4.89/27.9C4). * **7.35** *Red Rum - a National Treasure* (S) (9.02/9.60C4). **8.15** *On the Road Again*. Simon Dingle reaches Goa (S) (6.93/6.28C4). * **8.45** *The Mrs Merton Show* **Christmas Special**. Gary Rhodes, Amanda Barrie and Johnny Briggs of Coronation Street, and Glens Kinnock get a gentle ribbing (S) (5.62/8.27C4). * **9.15** *Three Knights*. Two Weddings and a Funeral. Last Christmas's fun and games with the talented Steve Coogan, in which Pauline Coughlin thinks she's found Mr Right (R) (S) (5.96/1.44C4). * **9.50** *Bottom* (R) (S) (1.78/7.05C4). * **10.20** *Screen Tries*. The Hawk. A serial killer, nicknamed "the Hawk", is preying on women, and a suburban wife, played by Helen Mirren, begins to suspect it's her husband (S) (8.35/5.45C4). **11.45** *Unplugged - Phil Collins* (S) (3.09/3.66C4). **12.35** *A Classic Ghost Story - Stalls of Banchester*. Clive Swift from *Keeping Up Appearances*. Coronation Street's Thelma Barlow, and Robert Hardy star in this MR James ghost story (R) (7.01/9.03C4). **1.20** *Et La Beaute du Diable* (René Clair 1949 FR/F). Old Michel Simon sells his soul to the devil so that he can be young and handsome enough to seduce Simone Valéry, in Clair's witty version of the Faust legend (6.14/3.61C4). **2.55** *Weatherview* (5.90/1.85C4). To 3.05am.

ITV/London

6.00 *GMTV*. 6.00 *The Sunday Review*. 6.30 *News and Sport*. 7.00 *The Sunday Programme* (5.48/9.0). **8.00** *Disney Adventures* (T) (4.25/3.67C4). * **9.25** *Big Foot* (Danny Huston 1987 US). Children's drama, being screened in two parts. Two children camping in the mountains of Oregon discover they are not alone (R) (2.59/4.12C4). **10.15** *Link* (S) (7.22/4.27C4). * **10.30** *This Sunday*, including, at 11.00, *Morning Worship* from Romford Centenary Halls (S) (1.34/3.4). * **12.00** *The Elf Who Saved Christmas*. Children's drama (4.77/2.43C4). * **1.00** *News, Weather* (2.67/5.40C4). * **1.15** *London Today* (2.75/3.32C4). * **1.10** *Hollywood's Greatest Stunts* (6.45/7.24C4). **2.10** *The Baby-Sitters Club* (9.34/1.51C4). **8.30** *Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?* (S) (7.14/0.96C4). **8.55** *Wise Up* (S) (3.66/1.45C4). **9.25** *The Big Breakfast*. Cliff Richard interviewed, while Neil Sedaka sings a carol (6.04/4.43C4). **10.25** *Saved by the Bell* (2.56/1.14C4). * **10.50** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Michael Curtiz 1960 US). Buster Keaton has a part in this decent version of the Mark Twain classic (2.12/2.81C4). **12.50** *Blue Christmas*. Fantasy short about two boys visited by the spirit of Elvis Presley (5.47/5.18C4). **1.05** *Little House on the Prairie* (7.75/5.34C4). **2.00** *Miracle on 34th Street* (George Seaton 1947 US). Thoroughly beguiling fantasy in which a New York department store Father Christmas (Edmund Gwenn) claims to be the real Santa Claus (6.57/7.86C4). **3.45** *The Mousehole Cat*. Animation (S) (4.21/2.90C4). * **4.25** *The Adventures of Mole*. Animation based on *The Wind in the Willows* and using the voices of Peter Davison, Richard Briers, Hugh Laurie and the late Paul Eddington (S) (5.15/2.63C4). **5.30** *Holyroaks* (S) (5.40C4). * **6.00** *The Persuaders*. Brett Sinclair comes round after a boozey night to find that he has a wife (2.0057). * **7.00** *Father Christmas*. Raymond Briggs's animation (S) (6.32/3.4C4). **7.30** *Ken Russell's Treasure Island*. Oh, humme. Ken Russell writes and directs a version of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale, with a female Long "Jane" Silver (Hettie Baynes) (7.69/9.89C4). **8.45** *Move Over, Darling* (Michael Gordon 1963 US). Highly regarded Doris Day comedy in which the clean, all-American Day returns home after five years stranded on a desert island to find her husband, James Garner, has remained (5.77/4.34C4). **10.45** *ER*. Repeat Christmas edition of the American medical saga (7.25/5.02C4). **11.40** *Who Was It Anyway?* (7.99/9.60C4). **12.10** *Glam Top Ten*. Alan Freeman and Tony Blackburn introduce music from the 1970s. Slade, Gary Glitter, Sweet, Mud, Wizards, Suzi Quatro and Alvin Stardust (R) (S) (1.59/2.09C4). **1.40** *Cavalcade* (Frank Lloyd 1933 US). Oscar-winning version of Noel Coward's chronicle of an upper-class English couple, their family and their servants from the Boer War to the early 1930s. Stars Diana Wynyard and Clive Brook (6.37/2.12C4). **3.40** *Rawhide* (9.40/1.21C4). To 4.35am.

Channel 4

6.05 *Blitz!* (R) (G33/7.94C4). **7.00** *The Herbs* (R) (1.72/4.92C4). **7.15** *Lift Off* (R) (S) (2.89/8.95C4). **7.45** *The Great Bond* (S) (7.80/6.05C4). **8.00** *The Baby-Sitters Club* (9.34/1.51C4). **8.30** *Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?* (S) (7.14/0.96C4). **8.55** *Wise Up* (S) (3.66/1.45C4). **9.25** *The Big Breakfast*. Cliff Richard interviewed, while Neil Sedaka sings a carol (6.04/4.43C4). **10.25** *Saved by the Bell* (2.56/1.14C4). * **10.50** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Michael Curtiz 1960 US). Buster Keaton has a part in this decent version of the Mark Twain classic (2.12/2.81C4). **12.50** *Blue Christmas*. Fantasy short about two boys visited by the spirit of Elvis Presley (5.47/5.18C4). **1.05** *Little House on the Prairie* (7.75/5.34C4). **2.00** *Miracle on 34th Street* (George Seaton 1947 US). Thoroughly beguiling fantasy in which a New York department store Father Christmas (Edmund Gwenn) claims to be the real Santa Claus (6.57/7.86C4). **3.45** *The Mousehole Cat*. Animation (S) (4.21/2.90C4). * **4.25** *The Adventures of Mole* Animation based on *The Wind in the Willows* and using the voices of Peter Davison, Richard Briers, Hugh Laurie and the late Paul Eddington (S) (5.15/2.63C4). **5.30** *Holyroaks* (S) (5.40C4). * **6.00** *The Persuaders*. Brett Sinclair comes round after a boozey night to find that he has a wife (2.0057). * **7.00** *Father Christmas*. Raymond Briggs's animation (S) (6.32/3.4C4). **7.30** *Ken Russell's Treasure Island*. Oh, humme. Ken Russell writes and directs a version of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale, with a female Long "Jane" Silver (Hettie Baynes) (7.69/9.89C4). **8.45** *Move Over, Darling* (Michael Gordon 1963 US). Highly regarded Doris Day comedy in which the clean, all-American Day returns home after five years stranded on a desert island to find her husband, James Garner, has remained (5.77/4.34C4). **10.45** *ER*. Repeat Christmas edition of the American medical saga (7.25/5.02C4). **11.40** *Who Was It Anyway?* (7.99/9.60C4). **12.10** *Glam Top Ten*. Alan Freeman and Tony Blackburn introduce music from the 1970s. Slade, Gary Glitter, Sweet, Mud, Wizards, Suzi Quatro and Alvin Stardust (R) (S) (1.59/2.09C4). **1.40** *Cavalcade* (Frank Lloyd 1933 US). Oscar-winning version of Noel Coward's chronicle of an upper-class English couple, their family and their servants from the Boer War to the early 1930s. Stars Diana Wynyard and Clive Brook (6.37/2.12C4). **3.40** *Rawhide* (9.40/1.21C4). To 4.35am.

ITV/Regions

ANGlia **6.00am** *GMTV* (5-8/9.09C4). **8.00** *Disney Adventures* (2.32-3.77C4). **9.25** *Before Christmas* (2.14/3.13C4). **10.30** *TV's Christmas* (2.14/2.15C4). **11.30** *It's a Wonderful Life* (2.14/2.15C4). **12.30** *Holiday Guests* (2.15/2.16C4). **2.10** *Film in the Snow* (2.25/2.24C4). **3.40** *The Spy Who Loved Me* (2.52/2.53C4). **4.00** *Disney's Great Stories* (2.53/2.54C4). **4.30** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.54/2.55C4). **5.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.55/2.56C4). **6.15** *Music Box* (2.56/2.57C4). **7.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.57/2.58C4). **8.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.58/2.59C4). **9.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.59/2.60C4). **10.15** *News* (2.60/2.61C4). **11.25** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.61/2.62C4). **12.25** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.62/2.63C4). **1.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.63/2.64C4). **2.15** *Film in the Snow* (2.64/2.65C4). **3.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.65/2.66C4). **4.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.66/2.67C4). **5.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.67/2.68C4). **6.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.68/2.69C4). **7.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.69/2.70C4). **8.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.70/2.71C4). **9.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.71/2.72C4). **10.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.72/2.73C4). **11.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.73/2.74C4). **12.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.74/2.75C4). **1.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.75/2.76C4). **2.15** *Film in the Snow* (2.76/2.77C4). **3.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.77/2.78C4). **4.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.78/2.79C4). **5.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.79/2.80C4). **6.15** *Music Box* (2.80/2.81C4). **7.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.81/2.82C4). **8.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.82/2.83C4). **9.15** *Disney's Greatest Stories* (2.8

Saturday Television and Radio

Film choice

by James Rampton

Dudley Moore is perfectly cast as the Elf who rebels in Jeanne Szwarc's *Santa Claus* (5.05pm BBC1). This silly caper can't help making you yearn for the simple days of Pete and Dud before Moore got seduced by the bright lights of Hollywood.

Brian Glover is a man of many parts. A former professional wrestler, he was the voice behind the Tetley tea cans and the teacher in *Kids* (Boxing Day C4). He is also a writer, penning Singleton's *Pluck* (7.30pm C4), a quirky drama about a farmer (Ian Holm) who decides to beat his flock of 500 geese the 100 miles to London. This unusual film is directed by Richard Eyre, now head of the Royal National Theatre.



Antonio Banderas blows his own trumpet

Schwarzenegger flexes his pecs as a crack commando up against a ferocious alien enemy in the Latin American jungle.

Antonio Banderas (the star of *Assassins* and currently being groomed by Hollywood as "the new Valentine") and Armand Assante (the baddie in *Judge Dredd*) are two Cuban musicians trying to make it in America after the War in Arne Glimcher's sparkling debut, *The Mambo Kings* (9.15pm BBC2).

Milos Forman has had many finer moments - *Amadeus*, to name but one - than *Hair* (11.10am BBC2), a terminally dated version of the Broadway musical about an Oklahoman who falls in with the flower-power bunch in Manhattan, a few days before he is supposed to go and fight in Vietnam.

John McTiernan is a top-rank action director; he brought pizzazz to the cartoon adventures of Bruce Willis in *Dic Hart* and utilised the same sense of style the previous year on *Predator* (11pm ITV). In this taut thriller, Arnold

Television choice

by Gerard Gilbert

Camelot, Anthea Turner, newsagents and a sprinkling of families are not the only ones to have benefited from the National Lottery. Writers, it seems, have discovered a whole new sub-genre - the lottery drama.

In *It Might Be You* (9.25pm BBC1), Nigel Williams (*The Wimbledon Poxon*) skips the genre's usual moralising and plays it largely for laughs, with Douglas Hodge's dim, married electrician hitting the jackpot on numbers supplied by his mistress, and then merrily laying the ticket. Frances Barber plays his wife, and Amanda Mealing is his co-star as the other woman.

Tx (8.40pm BBC2) presents Fiona Shaw's critically acclaimed performance of TS Eliot's *The Waste Land*.



Douglas Hodge is on a winning ticket

(7pm BBC2); opera - Carreras, Domingo and Pavarotti together on the eve of the 1990 World Cup Final in The Three Tenors (9pm C4); or Bob Dylan, revitalising his back list in Unplugged - Bob Dylan (11.25pm BBC2).

BBC1

7.25 News: Weather. 5.15-5.30. 7.30 Children's BSC: The Dwarf Tree. 7.40 Nick and Novel. 8.05 Eat, the Cat. 8.30 New Adventures of Superman.

9.15 Live and Kicking. Barbara Windsor takes viewers' calls (although children who only know Babes as the terrifying Peggy Mitchell might feel nervous about phoning in). Plus, the more kid-friendly: Ant and Dec, Donna Air, and Daniella Westbrook. 8.15-8.30 5.30-5.50.

12.30 News: Weather. 10.30-10.50.

12.35 Joy to the World. From the Royal Albert Hall, the Christmas concert, told in carols, comedy and dance by the Jokers; Sir Cliff Richard, Sarah Brightman, Patricia Hodge and Stan Phillips. Joy to the world. (SI) 12.30-1.30.

1.35 *ITV* Problem Child 2 (Brian Levent 1991 US). Appalling sequel to the eerie original about a put-upon father (John Ritter) adopting a devilish stepdaughter, who causes mayhem and mischief. A terrible example to impressionable children. Send them out caroling instead? (SI) 10.35-11.

3.05 *ITV* Santa Claus - the Movie (Jeanne Szwarc 1984 US). There's more than one dud on the screen as Dudley Moore plays an elf who leaves Santa's North Pole workshop and hotspots it to New York in search of fame and fortune? (SI) 9.30-10.30.

4.50 Final Score. 10.35-10.50.

5.15 News: Weather. 5.20-5.30.

5.25 Local News. Weather. 6.30-6.50.

5.30 Dad's Army. 7.30-8.15.

6.00 Jim Davidson's Generation Game. Special festive edition. Joy to the world (SI) 10.30-11.

7.00 All the Best for Christmas. Mike Tindall introduces comic Christmas moments from the BBC archives, from Lemmy Henry and Tony Hancock, to Till Death Us Do Part and One Foot in the Grave. But they scratched their heads a long time ago coming up with this idea? (SI) 12.20-1.

8.00 The National Lottery Live. 1.45-2.30.

8.15 Casualties. 5.15-5.30.

9.05 News and Sport: Weather. 10.35-10.50.

9.25 It Might Be You. Comedy starring Douglas Hodge as an electrician whose girlfriend buys him a lottery ticket that scoops £25 million - now all they have to do is find a way to pay off his wife? (SI) 7.30-8.15.

10.45 Match of the Day. Newcastle United vs Nottingham Forest and Liverpool vs Arsenal (SI) 5.30-6.30.

11.50 The Stand Up Show (SI) 2.30-3.00.

12.20 *ITV* Birth of the Beatles (Richard Marquand 1979 US). Risible biopic of the early days of the Mop-tops might be able to pass muster in Kansas, but the flaws are obvious (10.35-11).

2.00 Weather (8.55-9.15). To 2.05.

REGIONS: NI: 12.20 Wet Wet Wet in Concert. 1.25 Film: Birth of the Beatles.

BBC2

7.40 *ITV* The Gold Rush (Charlie Chaplin 1925 US). Once voted the second-best movie of all time by an international jury after *Battlestar Galactica*.

Charlie Chaplin plays a gold prospector during the Klondike rush in this sweet comedy full of classic images (Chaplin imagined as a chick by the starving Mack Swain; the dance of the bread rolls). Georgia Hale is the object of the little lad's devotion (7.79-8.55).

8.50 *ITV* The Invisible Man (James Whale 1933 US). Not exactly a role fit for a vain actor, since he is not seen for most of the movie. Claude Rains brought his expressive voice to bear in the part of a scientist made invisible by a drug. The script and special effects are both witty, and directed with the same sense of style that Whale brought to *Frankenstein* (17.92-20.55).

10.00 *Bollywood* '95. Review of the top 20 Indian films of the year (9.45-9.55).

11.00 Network East: Imran Khan... the Untold Story. Something of an exclusive if you care about these things, as Jemima Khan talks about her husband's conversion from international cricket to charity work (SI) 14.55-15.23.

11.50 Sports Review of the Year. Last Sunday's jamboree (SI) 15.33-15.55.

1.50 *ITV* Gypsy (Mervyn LeRoy 1962 US). Loud, brash version of Julie Styne and Stephen Sondheim's Broadway musical based on the story of stripper Gypsey Rose Lee, with a miscast Natalie Wood as Lee, and Rosalind Russell as her domineering mother (8.55-8.57).

4.10 The Oprah Winfrey Show. Joyful, hearty Oprah Winfrey discussed how size and shape affect perceptions of personality (13.55-13.57).

4.50 *ITV* Top 20 (SI) 14.55-15.00.

5.35 In Search of Santa (SI) 17.15-17.30.

6.15 *Bollywood* or Bust! The final of the Hindi cinema quiz (SI) 17.30-17.45.

7.00 Coppelia. Sir Peter Wright's production of Delibes's popular ballet performed by the Birmingham Royal Ballet (SI) 18.21-18.43.

8.40 *ITV* The Waste Land. Deborah Warner directs, and Fiona Shaw reads TS Eliot's poem (SI) 18.55-19.00.

9.15 *ITV* The Mambo Kings (Arne Glimcher 1992 US). Lively evocation of post-war America's mambo craze, with Armand Assante and Antonio Banderas as musician brothers who leave Cuba for New York to seek fame and fortune (SI) 19.18-19.37.

10.55 Here I Got News for You: The Best of 1995 (SI) 19.45-19.55.

11.25 Unplugged - Bob Dylan (SI) 2.15-3.00.

12.10 *ITV* Hair (Milos Forman 1979 US). Fiocci version of the famous Sixties "hippie musical" about a Vietnam draft-dodger (John Savage) adopted by Manhattan flower people, poor child (3.09-3.10).

2.05 Weatherview (9.52-9.59). To 2.15.

TV/London

6.00 *GMTV*. 6.00 News: Weather. 6.10 Re-Win.d. 6.40 Tom and Jerry Kids. 7.10 Barney and Friends. 7.45-8.55 Saturday Disney. The presenters host the show from India, so once PJ and Duncan don't "drop in". 8.55 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (8.21-8.58).

9.25 Cartoon Time (5.15-5.30).

9.45 *ITV* A Man for Christmas (George Miller 1990 US). Department store mannequin Olivia Newton-John comes to life and befriends a young girl who lives with her widowed father. Courtesy of Disney, natch (13.58-14.00).

11.30 The Chart Show (R) (SI) 18.55-19.00.

12.30 Speakeasy (S) 14.28-14.30.

1.05 Local News. Weather (2.67-2.68).

1.10 Movies, Games and Videos (4.41-10.07).

1.40 Simply the Best CIV Awards. Guests include Take That and East 17 in this recycled awards bash for which young viewers were the voters (R) (6.75-6.78).

2.50 Airwolf (R) (3.49-3.52).

3.45 Rugby World Cup 1995 Review. With Trevor McDonald, looking back at this summer's thrills and spills in South Africa (9.43-9.59).

4.45 News: Sport (1.43-1.45).

5.05 Local News. Sport (6.11-6.14).

5.20 New Baywatch. Los Angeles lifeguard grief (S) (13.05-13.10).

6.15 Gladiators (S) 19.45-19.50.

7.15 Blind Date (including Lottery Result) (S) (13.08-13.12).

8.15 Stars in Their Eyes Christmas Special. Ronnie Spector, Michael Bolton, Alice Cooper and kd lang discover they have doppelgängers, in a bumper edition of the cringe-making entertainment show (SI) (16.25-16.35).

9.00 News: National Lottery Update; Weather (1.35-1.38).

9.15 Jack Dee's Saturday Night. Meat Loaf, Lily Savage and East 17 join the scowly one's misconceived variety show (SI) (17.59-17.59).

10.00 *ITV* Predator (John McTiernan 1987 US).

Smash, bang, wallop in the jungle as commando Amie Schwarzenegger and his men are picked off by an invisible alien (SI) (17.52-17.55).

11.55 *ITV* Repossessed (Bob Logan 1990 US). Linda Blair helps spoof her head-turning act from *The Exorcist* in this extremely lame comedy co-starring Leslie Nielsen (5.11-17.55).

1.25 Entertainment Now. Review of the year in showbiz terms, from Grant and Hurley to Stur and Oasis (5.56-5.58).

2.25 *ITV* No Room to Run (Robert Michael Lewis 1978 US). Minor spy thrill starring career-marooned Richard Benjamin as an American framed for murder in Australia (1.27-12.24).

4.00 *ITV* Life at the Top (Ted Kotcheff 1965 UK). Failed sequel to *Room at the Top* starring Laurence Harvey and Jean Simmons (1.33-1.35).

5.00 *ITV* Weather (1.35-1.37).

Channel 4

6.05 Sesame Street (R) (1.58-1.59).

7.05 Ovive (R) (4.48-4.58).

7.15 The Adventures of Sonic the Hedgehog (R) (2.45-2.50).

7.40 Wowsers (R) (5.17-5.56).

8.00 Trans World Sport (7.97-7.97).

9.00 Blitz! American Football (12.28-12.30).

10.00 *ITV* Hill Home (Fred Wilcox 1948 US). Prime Lassie vehicle, reworking Greyfriars Bobby in the Scottish Highlands (1.57-1.58).

11.45 Your Generation. Britpop acts caught live at this year's Glastonbury Festival: Blur, Oasis, Pulp, Supergrass, Boo Radleys, Elastica, Dodge and Radiohead (S) (1.57-1.58).

12.40 *ITV* Call of the Wild (William Wellman 1935 US). When you've finished watching *The Gold Rush* over on BBC2, you can see Clark Gable's take on the Klondike years. Based very loosely on the Jack London novel of the same name (7.61-7.62).

2.10 *ITV* The Jungle Book (Zoltan Korda 1942 UK).

Sabu was a natural to play Mowgli in the Korla brothers' lavish but ponderous live-action version of the Kipling tale (9.42-9.45).

4.10 Ginger Nut's Bed Batter. Vintage animation from David Hand (18.56-18.57).

4.20 *ITV* Lonely Planet. Ian Wright trudges round Morocco (6.10-6.12).

5.05 Brookside. Jimmy Corkhill on drugs, Katie with HIV and all that grief (S) (7.48-7.55).

6.30 *ITV* Miss Pettigrew Lives Next Door. Nick restocks his organ shop to working in an organ store (R) (S) (6.56).

7.00 News Summary. Weather (7.59-7.60).

7.20 *ITV* Singleton's Pluck (Richard Eyer 1984 UK). Written by actor Brian Glover, this misiring comedy/satire stars Ian Holm as a gorse farmer struggling with a plucker's strike, a shaky marriage and a mounting overdraft, who is persuaded by his daughter to walk his 500 geese to London in time for the Christmas market. Penelope Wilton and Bill Owen help out. Frank Capra it ain't (22.29-22.35).

9.00 The Three Tenors. Becoming almost as much a seasonal fixture as the Queen or the latest Nick Park animation - José Carreras, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti sing together on the eve of the 1990 World Cup Final (6.12-6.14).